

SlapStick! 4

The Magazine Devoted
to the Appreciation,
Documentation &
Preservation of
Early Film Comedy

A black and white portrait of actress Alice Howell. She is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, off-the-shoulder dress with a lace or beaded trim along the neckline. Her hair is styled in a short, curly bob. She is looking slightly to her left with a soft expression, and her right hand is raised, resting near her neck.

**ALICE
HOWELL**

DEDICATION

Over the years I've made many friends who have shared the same interest in early comedy and many of whom have been of tremendous help. To those people and all our new subscribers, I dedicate this fourth issue to you...

Rob Farr, Joe Moore, Bill Sprague, George Reed, Paul & Christal Kassig, Richard Roberts, Cole Johnson, Mark Johnson, Steve Massa, Pierre Pageau, Jean-Jacques Couderc, Floyd Bennett, Andrew McKay, Claudia Sassen, Dr. Reuben Matzkin, Joan Berschler, Lisa Huber, Phil Posner, Bo Berglund, Bob Birchard, Eddie Quillan, Madeline Hurlock-Sherwood, Walter Lantz, Hal Haig-Priest, and there's been many more whom time has caused me to forget; you know who you are so forgive me!

Thanks must also be given to everyone involved in the making of these early comedies we love so well.

Special thanks to my family for always being here.

Thank you all,

Steve Rydzewski
– Editor

The Magazine Devoted to the Appreciation, Documentation & Preservation of Early Film Comedy

SlapStick!

WELCOME!

Welcome to the fourth issue of Slapstick! The magazine dedicated to the appreciation, documentation and preservation of early film comedy!

First off, I want to thank everyone for your positive feedback of our first three issues! Once again, you made this fourth issue possible! And with your help, we're gonna keep pluggin' away at this labor of love!

I wanted to make some changes with this fourth issue, a few might be obvious, others will have to wait till next issue. *We want to grow and improve!*

This issue filled up fast so a couple of things will have to wait until next issue... But there's plenty here to keep you busy.

My personal apologies to my Larry Semon friend, Claudia Sassen, for being unable to use all the great and rare illustrations she supplied, from her own fabulous collection and others.

Keep the feedback coming, let us know what we should do to improve the magazine. For now, enjoy this issue and let me get to work on number five!

Take care and enjoy!

*Thanks
Steve*

Steve Rydzewski
— Editor



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Please address all correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, artwork, advertising to:
Steve Rydzewski, 12554 Deerrun Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154
or e-mail srydzewski@aol.com

SlapStick!

LETTERS

We want to hear from you! Please send your letters, comments, corrections, additions, or whatever to **Slapstick!** c/o Steve Rydzewski, 12554 Deerrun Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19154 or e-mail to: srydzewski@aol.com



Dear Steve,

Wow! Thanks so much, at long last a magazine devoted to OUR kind of comedy. I really appreciate your achievement. If I can ever be of any assistance in any capacity, please let me know, it would be an honor to help out.

All the best,

Ed Watz, Morganville, NJ

Hi Steve:

Gosh the pictures are worth the price! Will try and drag out reading, so as to make it last. Gosh I hate to wait until the next issue. Oh well, I know it's work putting these together!

Best Regards,

Jack Huey, Sonora, CA

Hi Steve,

I think Slapstick! #3 may be your best one yet. The letters section is a fun addition. The articles are all uniformly excellent and when put together they give the issue a very nice variety. And of course it looks great. The reader can really see all the time you spend slaving over it.

Best,

Steve Massa, New York

Dear Steve,

I found the third issue of Slapstick! very interesting. I appreciate the effort you put into your magazine.

Best Wishes,

Simon Myers, Middlesex, U.K.

Thanks Steve,

I bet I will join the rabble rousers demanding a monthly magazine, with the strategy being to get at least a quarterly version out of you!

(Seriously, no one who's not doing what you're doing realizes just how MUCH work there is, in creating a magazine, when it's a one man job in putting your work and others' work all together.)

With your present schedule, it can remain a labor of love for you, without becoming a burden, though I bet there are days...

You've got a worldwide audience, I see. (I learned about it from Rob Farr, I think, after reading some a.m.s. postings. Yes! If I'd done a Deja/Now or Google search, I'd have found your mailing address there among the past postings... duuuuuh!)

I've come at a good time, with the fourth issue set for June. I won't know what REAL waiting is, for a while.

As I look back over of your a.m.s. postings, let me mention how (right off the bat) I notice not only your enthusiasm, but also the fact that you're excited about someone e-l-s-e discovering a new person or film, new to them, that is, as well. Instead of a "You didn't know about Billy Gilbert being in those shorts?" you're excited for them, and recalled when you discovered that fact, too. Always the sign of a good, generous person.

Take care!

Jan Willis, Tupelo, MS

Dear Steve,

Enclosed is a check for Slapstick #4. #3 was great.

One reason Larry Semon is unappreciated is because most of his shorts exist in poor quality prints.

Has anyone ever written on Kewpie Morgan or the Three Fatties, one of whom was Frank Alexander? And what about him? For a big guy, he sure took a beating!

Sincerely,

Alan Grossman, Florence, Oregon

Dear Steve,

Received my copy of Slapstick #3. They are getting better issue by issue! Thanks for the article on "our man Harry" (Langdon)! Harry made a big splash in the comedy world but unfortunately not for a very long time. He was definitely a comic genius, no matter what the critics have said. I just had the thought that there is a similarity between Langdon and Larry Semon, in that they both faded out prematurely, supposedly because of "ego" problems. But their films prove that they had what it takes to be great comedians. Slapstick, EVEN as it came out of the Mack Sennett factory, began to be criticized for not having a plot or much of a story. I wonder if that's how we wound up with the sick, unfunny "comedy" of today. The adding of sound didn't help much either!

Yes, I do know about the Harry Langdon Society. I've been to the home of Mr. Floyd Bennett twice for his Langdon birthday cookout. Floyd and his wife Arlene are some of the nicest people I know.

LETTERS

We want to hear from you! Please send your letters, comments, corrections, additions, or whatever to **Slapstick!** c/o Steve Rydzewski, 12554 Deerrun Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19154 or e-mail to: srydzewski@aol.com

Was also with Floyd out in Council Bluffs for the first ever Harry Langdon Day in Harry's home state.

Sending a filmography of Ben Turpin that I found in an old (Dec. 1988) issue of *Classic Images*, although you probably have it.

P.S.- Wonder if that's you on the backcover of #3? Looks like the bell ringing device might have been invented by Buster Keaton for his "Electric House"!

All the Best,

Ed Lee, Kentucky

Dear Steve:

Many thanks for the color issue of number three of *Slapstick!* Another gem of an issue. Am greatly looking forward to the fourth issue!

I was greatly interested in the information on Jess Dandy, that he at one time was well-known for a catch-phrase of, "Vos you effer in Zinzinnatti?" because for a long time I have had a 78rpm recording from c1941 by Freddie "Schnikelfritz" Fisher and his Orchestra, on the Decca label, called "Was You Ever In Cincinnatti?" I had no idea that it tied in with what apparently would have still been a well-known phrase at that point in time. (For those who aren't familiar with Fisher's work, for the sake of brevity I will merely say that he was a musical predecessor of Spike Jones, and that many of his extensive group of recordings are long overdue for reissue.)

I found the Langdon reprint extremely interesting. All too often he is dismissed as a misguided talent who only "hit the mark" when he was directed by Frank Capra. There is no doubt in my mind that Capra's comments have greatly contributed to Langdon's reduced stature in the pantheon of great film comedians. Or, in other words, Capra's remarks are too often accepted at face value and not evaluated sufficiently to see if they stand up under the microscope, as it were, or not. Even as late as his final feature film, "Swingin' On A Rainbow," Langdon was still very entertaining to see.

Shall no doubt think of something else, but shall close for now. Best wishes to you and the magazine -

All the best -

Cody Morgan, Las Vegas, Nevada

Steve,

Thanks so much for the magazines and for the opportunity to put a little of my past (ancestry) onto paper. I've enjoyed working with you.

I feel like I've made out like a bandit, so I am including this check in hope that it might assist in what you are doing to preserve these stories about wonderful people.

Lisa Huber, Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Steve,

I have received the three issues of *SLAPSTICK!* and I am really impressed with them. Congratulations on a fine publication. It is gratifying to see serious, full-scale articles on individuals who have usually received in the past a footnote (if even that) in other magazines or books. I am thinking especially of Mary Thurman and Madeline Hurlock, two very deserving leading ladies who have been given so little attention. I am not telling you anything you do not already know when I say the illustrations you have published in all three issues are extremely rare and beautifully chosen.

I enjoy the contemporaneous interviews (which are also very rare to find), as well as the continuity scripts which in my opinion are more

useful for research than the original scenarios because they tell us what was contained in the completed, edited film. I also was delighted with Phil Posner's "Chaplin Keystone Comedies" filmography with detailed and corrected identifications, and Bo Berglund's "The Two Faces of Fritz Schade" which finally lays to rest many old and confusing mis-identifications. I remember running across mentions of Jess Dandy in my own research through the trade periodicals of the time (1914), but not following through on just what he looked like, who he was, and what films might he have appeared in.

By following through on such questions, Bo Berglund has done a great service to the film scholarship community, as he has on many issues down through the years relating to Charlie Chaplin and the many unsung and talented people who worked with Chaplin.

I think your choosing to chronicle the Paramount-Mack Sennett Comedies is also a most interesting idea because as you know so few of those films survive. Perhaps your attention to this important series of films will help to inspire collectors and film archives around the world to see what they might have that otherwise would go undetected under alternate titles, foreign titles, no titles at all, etc. I thought Claudia Sassen's list of Larry Semon films with their foreign titles was very useful, for that very reason.

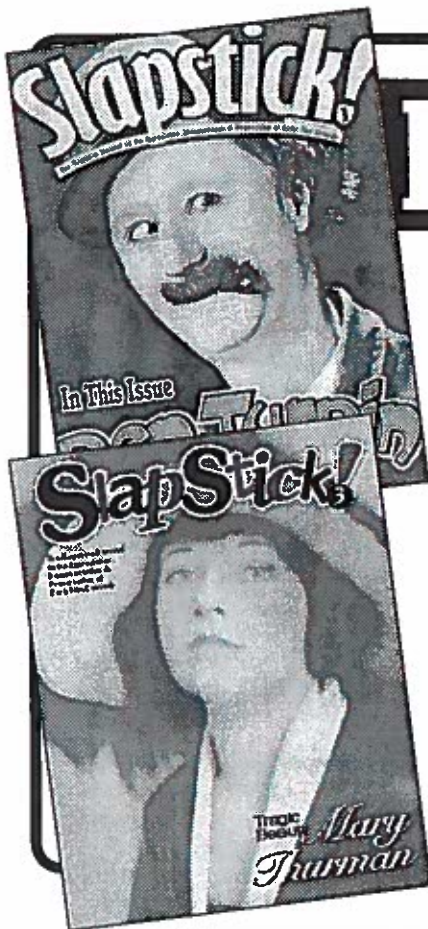
Your Ben Turpin articles are excellent, too, and I really look forward to the detailed filmography you have planned at the conclusion of the articles, because having an "as-complete-as-possible" Ben Turpin filmography will be extremely helpful. As you know, Ben Turpin appeared in films as early as 1907; and in fact, David Kiehn, a friend of mine and extremely knowledgeable Essanay film historian, has informed me that AN AWFUL SKATE, Essanay's first film with Turpin as star, does exist in the collections of the George Eastman House. Perhaps you know more about this?

Well, I realize this e-mail has turned into a long list of praises, but in my opinion you and the authors who have submitted articles, pictures and information deserve them. There has been so little serious attention given to the "lesser-lights" of American silent film, with the exception of a serious researcher like Richard Roberts and his many excellent articles for *CLASSIC IMAGES*. It is wonderful and gratifying to see that you, along with Richard Roberts and so very few others, are putting a major effort into remedying this serious oversight. You asked about Alice Howell and that interesting not-so-little series of Sunkist Comedies. I have run across references to this series, and I am positive that only a fraction of the total number of films planned were actually produced. As you surmise, I suspect the films were picked up for distribution with the Reelcraft product. I am planning to see Richard Roberts this weekend, and I'll ask him what he thinks about this. I know Tony Slide was curious about this as well (Tony has just completed a monograph on Alice Howell for her grandson, George Stevens, Jr.). Perhaps Tony is the author of your article?

Shortly, I will be sending you a copy of that Snakeville filmography that I promised you, the one that David Kiehn and I compiled last June. It can stand many additions and corrections, but it does list 104 Snakeville comedies with cast, verified release date, synopsis, illustration (for 28 of the comedies), where filmed (usually Niles, California), statement regarding sources of extant prints, etc. I think you'll enjoy it, as Ben Turpin appeared in a fair number of them, especially later in the series, sometimes as "Bloggie" with Lloyd Bacon as "Hotch."

Well, I must close now, but I sure wanted to thank you for sending those three issues of *SLAPSTICK!* and I certainly congratulate you on a fine publication that I hope lasts for many a moon, and many a sun too. With warm regards, and looking forward to being in touch with you in the future, I am yours, sincerely,

Sam Gill, Los Angeles, CA



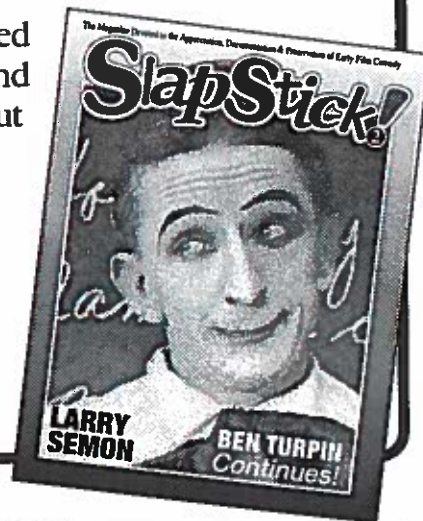
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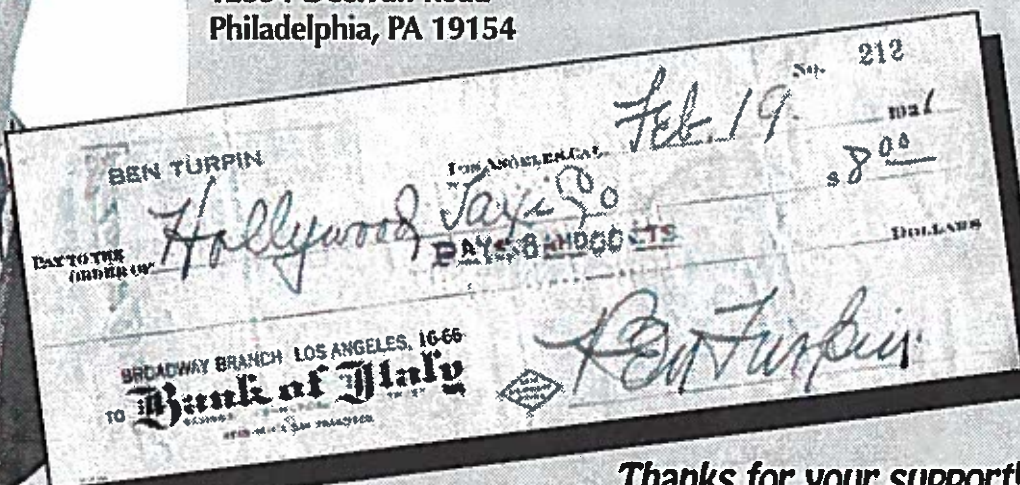
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Thanks for your support!

Alice Howell

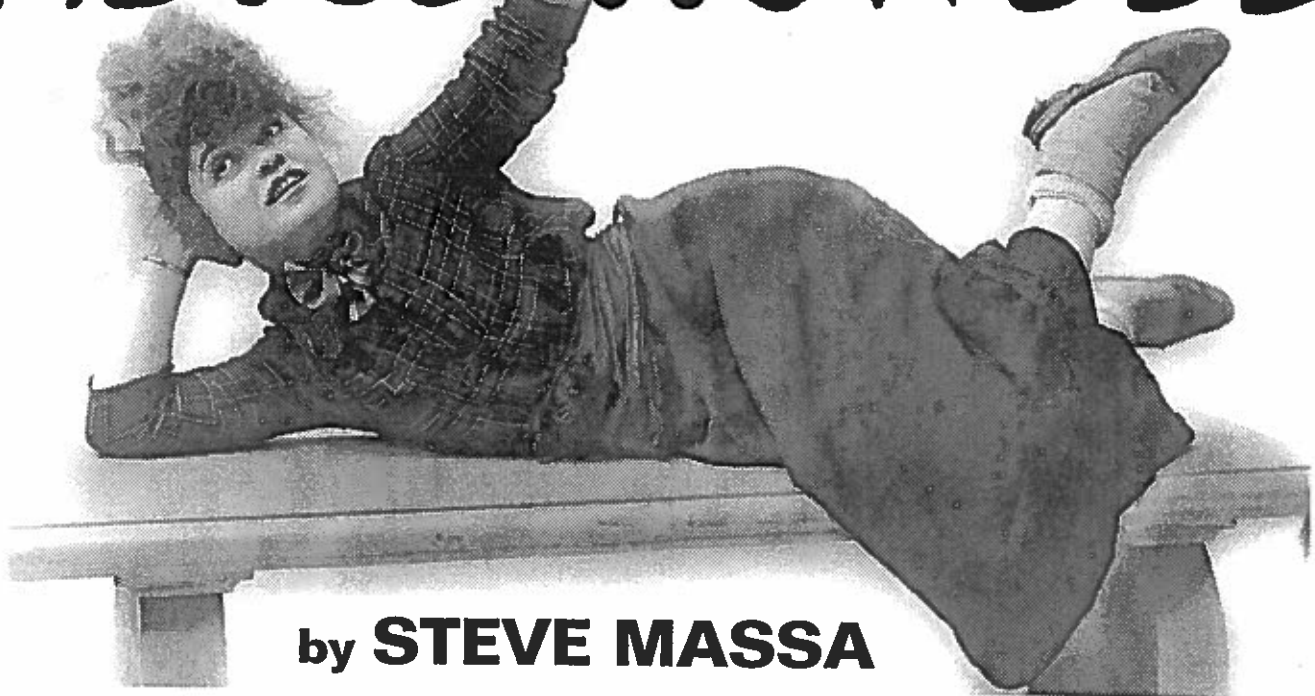


Photo courtesy Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive

by **STEVE MASSA**

Alice Howell is a name that turns up frequently in writings on silent comedy. She's often listed along with Mabel Normand, Louise Fazenda, Gale Henry, and Anita Garvin as one of the notable comediennes of the era. And that's usually it – just a mention. Alice was a popular comedy star, who had a unique style that combined feminine delicacy with out and out roughhouse, but outside of a couple of pieces by historians Anthony Slide, Kalton C. Lahue, and Sam Gill, there's been really nothing detailed written about her.

This neglect is due to the scarcity of her films which has put her reputation in limbo. The bulk of her shorts were made for Universal and Reelcraft, both of which have terrible survival rates. A number of Keystones where she has supporting bits are around. But out of her seventy-plus starring comedies, only about four are readily available to silent comedy fans. Her other surviving films, representing only a fraction of her output, are scattered in various distant archives and difficult to see. In this article I'd like to put her biographical information together with a fresh look at some of the existing films.

Details on her early years are sketchy. She was born Alice Clark in New York City on May 15, 1888, and may have started performing as a child. The Moving Picture World of Sept. 29, 1917 gave this description:

"Irish parentage. Is five feet two inches tall and weighs 130 pounds. Fair complexion, red hair and brown eyes."

A short-lived first marriage produced a daughter, Yvonne, and in 1910 she met her second husband Richard Smith in a De Wolf Hopper musical comedy. Smith, usually known as Dick Smith when performing, is another neglected silent comedy veteran. Together they formed a comedy and eccentric dancing act and toured the country as Howell and Howell. Alice demonstrates a bit of her original style of dancing in CINDERELLA CINDERS ('20) and UNDER A SPELL ('25).

In early 1914 Alice began appearing in small bits and walk-ons in Mack Sennett Keystone films. Dick Smith had contracted tuberculosis and was sent to California to recuperate in the warm climate, so Alice took over the roles of nurse and sole financial support for the family. As she remembered in 1918:

"I came to California because the health of one of the members of my family demanded it. Pictures claimed me because I had to earn a living. I've tried my best to make good. It was a pretty hard struggle to get along at first. When I started at Keystone there were times when rainy weather kept my salary down to as low as six and nine dollars a week. That wasn't very much to live on, was it? Thank goodness that period is over."

The choice of Keystone makes sense considering Alice's comedy background, but another possible factor is that Dick Smith reportedly worked for Mack Sennett at Biograph in New York and turned down an offer to go west when Sennett formed Keystone. If this is true it must have made it easier for Alice to get in the door there. Her early appearances, in shorts like CAUGHT IN A CABARET, CAUGHT IN THE RAIN, and THE KNOCKOUT (all 1914), are in large groups as a society partygoer, or a hotel guest. Based on Alice's later recollections she was probably working at Keystone every week, but since the Chaplins' and a few of the Arbuckle or Normand shorts are the only 1914 Keystones in current circulation, it's impossible to know how many she actually appeared in.

She did make rapid progress and in a few months was getting small bits where she would have business and a chance to shine, at least for a moment. In LAUGHING GAS she plays the dentist's wife who not only loses her skirt and exposes her bloomers but also takes a big fall on some stone stairs. HELLO MABEL has her hanging around in a hotel lobby so that Mack Swain and Al St. John can take turns knocking her down. Eventually she began getting featured roles, as in CURSED BY HIS BEAUTY where she plays Charlie Murray's washer-woman wife who comes after him with guns a-blazing when she sus-

pects him of infidelity with Alice Davenport, and stars in at least one one-reeler, **SHOT IN THE EXCITEMENT**, released on October 26, 1914. In this short Alice is helping her father white-wash a fence when sweetheart Al St. John comes calling. Complications ensue when a jealous rival shows up, and the film ends up with Alice, Al, the rival, Dad, and a couple of cops all being chased by flying cannonballs. Fast moving and entertaining by primitive Keystone standards, Alice and Al make a very funny pair of lower-class lovers and have great timing together. Already doing her penguin-waddle walk, which may have come from her vaudeville act, Alice takes a lot of punishment – she slips down stairs, gets soaked with water, is chased by a cannonball, and has a rock bounced off her head. By this time she was becoming known as "The Keystone Scrub Lady."

Despite attention and bigger parts at Sennett, Alice took an offer from Henry "Pathe" Lehrman to join his new L-KO Comedies in the beginning of 1915. Lehrman had been Sennett's second-in-command and lured away Keystoneers like Alice, Hank Mann, Peggy Pearce, and George "Pop" Nichols for his rival company, which was distributed by Universal. By all accounts a callous and nasty individual, Lehrman was nicknamed "Suicide" by the comics who worked for him, and some people, notably Billie Ritchie and Virginia Rappe, came to bad ends due to their association with him. Luckily Alice, like the young director Jack White, were able to limit their tenure with him and move on to greater success.

For Alice the move to L-KO was an opportunity for more money and screen time. At first she was used as support in two-reelers with Billie Ritchie and Harry Gribbon. In Ritchie's **SIN ON THE SABBATH** ('15) Alice plays Louise Orth's mother (they look the same age) and has a couple of scenes at the family home with Orth, Gene Rogers, and Reggie Morris, but has no real business. At the same time she was starring in one-reelers like **CUPID AND THE SCRUB LADY** and **FROM BEANERY TO BILLIONS** where her screen persona came to full fruition. Most of the popular comedienesses of the day, such as

Mabel Normand, Dorothy Devore, and Billie Rhodes, were pretty and romance was an important ingredient in their films, but Alice, like Gale Henry, was pure clown. The character she developed was that of a slightly addled working-class girl, beanery waitress, maid, charwoman – anything that fell under the term "slavery". Although she was attractive, her comic get-up emphasized the eccentric. A round Kewpie-doll face, with large eyes and bee-stung lips, was topped off with a mountain of frizzy hair piled high on her head that resembled smoke billowing from an active volcano. To compliment her look of someone who had just kissed an electric light socket she wore old-fashioned plaid or checkered blouses, long print skirts, and big clod-hopper shoes. Her physical timing and movements were as clean and precise as Keaton and Chaplin's, and she could match tumbles and falls with Al St. John and Billie Ritchie. A stiff-backed penguin-waddle walk and her pile of hair became her signature trademarks.

Her popularity was growing. The New York Telegraph noted on Oct. 28, 1916:

Alice Howell Starred

Alice Howell, the tousel-haired comedienne, is starred all by her lonely on November 7 in the L-KO comedy, "**ALICE IN SOCIETY**," which is released on November 7. Fatty Voss supports her as best as he can with his 310 pounds Fahrenheit.

Besides Fatty Voss she had solid support from Raymond Griffith, Phil Dunham, Billy Bevan, and Dick Smith. Smith's health had improved to the extent that he joined the company at the end of 1915 and stayed for about a year, eventually moving over to Vitagraph to support Jimmy Aubrey alongside Oliver Hardy.

In the beginning of 1917 "Pathe" Lehrman left L-KO for Fox Films, and it was taken over by Abe and Julius Stern, nephews of Universal's head Carl Laemmle. Alice had become such an audience favorite that the Sterns set up a separate company for her.

L-KO



Ad courtesy James Kotsilibas-Davis

Scream Producer Extraordinary

**“Silk hose
and high pressure”**

In three convulsing reels.
Billie Ritchie

Produced by a bunch of nuts that simply make Rome howl
is the chief of this howling Comedy and is ably assisted by
Louise Orth, Gene Rogers, Alice Howell, and other L-Ko Stars

SEEING is believing...and that's the only way in the wide, wide world that you can appreciate this latest L-KO knockout, "**SILK HOSE AND HIGH PRESSURE**." Nutty Bill is supported in this 3-reel side-splitter by a bunch of genuine nuts, all L-KO stars that know more about how to get the laughs than any comedy company on earth. Bill, Louise, Gene and Alice pull enough nut stuff in "**SILK HOSE AND HIGH PRESSURE**" to satisfy the gronchiest individual that ever stepped inside of a Movie House. Hook this colossal half-getter and your audience will enjoy the biggest scream of the season. Other L-KO comedies going over big are "**MR. FLIRT IN WRONG**" with May Emory, Vin Moore and Charles Winninger as the leading laugh makers. Don't miss it!

"A BATH HOUSE TRAGEDY" in two reels with Hank Mann, Peggy Pearce and Dick Smith. In this picture appears a swimming pool scene that outclasses anything you've ever seen in film in this line. It's one of those strictly original L-KO's. Hook it. Also hook that 2-reel scream, "**BOOM & NOISE**" - \$1.50, with Billie Ritchie, Louise Orth, Alice Howell. Be sure to hook "**SIN ON A SABBATH**," featuring Billie Ritchie, Louise Orth, Gene Rogers, Alice Howell and Reggie Morris. Millions of people are simply wild about L-KO comedies. Hook 'em!



L-Ko Comedy Co

Hollywood, Cal.

Released Wed-Sep-8

7

The Moving Picture World of May 19, 1917 announced:

ALICE HOWELL IN NEW COMEDIES

Julius Stern, President of L-KO Comedies, and J. G. Blystone, general director, have determined that Alice Howell has so firmly established herself as a favorite, through her appearance in L-KO's, that the time has come to recognize her talents and encourage and reward her energies. They will therefore present her hereafter in a new brand of mirth-makers, to be called Howl Comedies. Three productions are ready for distribution and Director Blystone has others now contemplated or in active preparation.

"Women have demonstrated on the stage that they can be just as funny as the comedians of musical comedy, burlesque, vaudeville, or farce. We propose to establish Miss Howell as a comedy star upon the screen and we have faith in our determination. Miss Howell has "made good" as L-KO's leading comedienne and we are convinced that she will duplicate her past success as a star of her own series."

"BALLOONATICS" will be the first Howl Comedy to be distributed. In this feature the star goes up in the air to demonstrate the great possibilities of an air-ship in provoking laughter. "AUTOMANIACS" her second feature will show that a motor may be the basis of merriment, while in "NEPTUNE'S NAUGHTY DAUGHTER" Miss Howell will go under water to get laughs.

"Under Director Blystone the star of Howl Comedies has demonstrated her fearless daring in performing stunts as hazardous and difficult as any man has ever undertaken — qualified of course, by the limitations of sex, in some instances. She knows how to get laughs out of every situation where a laugh may possibly be planted, and she will have greater opportunities than ever to develop her talents as a comedienne in Howl Comedies."

Somewhere along the way Howl Comedies became Century Comedies, although howl was used in advertising slogans like "You'll howl at Howell" and "Every Howell a howl". J.G. Blystone was John Blystone, a director and Lehrman assistant who got promoted when Lehrman left, and by 1920 would move to Fox himself to direct Clyde Cook and Lupino Lane. Blystone's idea was to take her established character and put it in diverse situations. Now that she was a full-fledged comedy star Universal's publicity department regularly put out

THE MOVING PICTURE WEEKLY

CENTURY COMEDIES

Ad courtesy James Kotsilivas-Davis

PRESENT

Alice Howell

IN AN AERIAL ABSURDITY

"BALLOONATICS"

DIRECTION BY J.G. BLYSTONE

RELEASED SEPT. 1ST. THROUGH THE LONGACRE DISTRIBUTING COMPANY

Watch for My First Release—September 1

Yours for success

ALICE HOWELL

CENTURY COMEDIES
1600 Broadway New York

COMING!

"AUTOMANIACS" OCT. 1ST

"NEPTUNE'S NAUGHTY DAUGHTER" NOV. 1ST

"HER BAREBACK CAREER" DEC. 1ST

interviews and publicity pieces, many of which give a glimpse of her down-to-earth personality and theories on comedy:

"The days are not so far in retrospection when I was glad to do any kind of work and I have not forgotten how it feels to stand in line waiting for a chance to do extra work. I wanted the money so badly that I offered to wear any eccentric sort of make-up or take any chances so long as there was a pay check at the end of the week.

"I often felt then like the down-trodden, put upon, much abused slaves that I struggle to portray humorously today. Most of my scenes are broad farce, of course, but when I get an opportunity I try to register faithfully the character of such a girl."

— N.J. Tribune, Sept. 2, 1917

and:

"The absurd costume makes meaningless antics even less funny than they are in ordinary clothes," says Miss Howell. "I have succeeded in making people laugh hardest at my pictures when I was wearing a very nice evening gown. Your whole body must work with you. The idea is to exaggerate just in the right place. You know how just one comic touch in the middle of a serious situation will upset everybody's gravity, the same as a feeble joke in church will make everybody helpless with laughter. Well, that is the principle in a comic make up — indeed of all comedy. Otherwise it is just senseless slapstick stuff with all the absurdity dragged in by the hair. That sort of thing never makes people laugh really hard. An inch is a very small thing, except on the end of your nose. That is the principle in a nutshell."

— Milwaukee News, Nov. 19, 1917

Alice's popularity continued to build during the two and a half years she spent with Century, helped by support from comedy vets like Billy Armstrong, Neal Burns, Phil Dunham, and Hughie

Photo courtesy Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive



Alice pulls the wool on Joe Moore in an early unidentified L-KO short.

LONGACRE
Distributing
Company

we have the complete film
library for 1920-21
and 1922-23 for 100
cents. Write for details.
Second office in all the
territorial cities.



Century
Comedies
Present

Alice Howell

"Neptune's Naughty Daughter"
Directed by J. G. Blystone

If you can secure a steady contract for CENTURY COMEDIES featuring ALICE HOWELL, do it and do it quickly. The foremost houses are showing CHUCKLE COMEDIES in a constantly growing patronage. There's a reason. You'll soon realize it when you see the pulling power of these Famous Comedy Productions.

Begin at the beginning. Book these winning comedies: "BALLYHOO" and "AUTO-MANIA" - Book "NEPTUNE'S NAUGHTY DAUGHTER" - and watch for the coming release - "HER BAREBACK CARTEE" - all featuring ALICE HOWELL. Book through your nearest LONGACRE branch office.

LONGACRE DISTRIBUTING CO., 1600 Broadway, New York

Ad courtesy James Katsilbas-Davis

Mack, but when the Stern Brothers began spending more time on animal comedies she left. As it turned out, in the 1920's the Sterns specialized in mediocre animal and kid comedies with stars like Brownie the dog, Maude the mule, Baby Peggy, Arthur Trimble as Buster Brown, and the dreaded Sunny McKeen as Snookums in The Newlyweds and Their Baby series.

Given her popularity, Alice and Dick Smith then made an unusual move - they signed with the Emerald Motion Picture Co. a small independent studio based in Chicago. Emerald had also signed well-known Chaplin imitator Billy West for a series, and Howell and Smith moved to Chicago and started production. An item from the Wisconsin News announced:

ALICE HOWELL AT MOVIE BALL. "Fans, meet Alice Howell, Emerald star, who is to be present at the big movie ball given by the F-I-L-M Club at the Auditorium Saturday evening. Miss Howell has been induced to abandon the Emerald Studios in Chicago long enough to make the trip here, so it is no more than fair that the fans turn out to greet her.

Alice Howell, whose name is familiar with young and old alike who follow the movies, is just as pleasant as she looks. Perhaps it is her delicious appreciation of humor and her ability of making that humor predominate in her screen work. Alice Howell is a comedienne of the first water and a star within her rights. Her new comedies, which will be shown in Milwaukee very soon, reveal originality. Surrounding Miss Howell is a cast of players, who must necessarily measure up to the standard that she has set, and the public is soon to be the spectator of what really is comedy. Contestants in the Wisconsin News Screen Talent Contest will meet Miss Howell the night of the ball, when she will talk over the situation and render valuable advice. Miss Howell is ideally equipped to tell from her own experience what motion picture work really is."

After her new series began shooting, Emerald merged with the Bulls Eye Film Co, Bee Hive Film Exchange, and the Interstate Film Co. to form Reelcraft, a good sized independent company, which made, to quote Kalton C. Lahue, "low-burlesque charades" for states rights release. Reelcraft also distributed the films of Gale Henry, Billy West, Milburn Moranti, Billy Franey, Billy Quirk, and many others. Besides the films it produced, Reelcraft would also pick up stray shorts, like THE LUCKY DOG ('21) with Stan Laurel, which, for whatever reasons, had never been released. One of Alice's first releases for the company falls into this category. DISTILLED LOVE ('20) co-stars Oliver Hardy and appears not to have been shot in Chicago. Rob Stone, in his invaluable book LAUREL OR HARDY, describes it as looking like it may have been put together from two separate films and may have been shot somewhere in 1918 when Hardy spent a brief time working for L-KO. Another possibility could be that it's part of the mystery of the Sun Kist Comedy Company (see illustration in filmography). Exhibitor ads in 1920 boldly announced 52 one reeler for the year but there's no definite information on the series. Perhaps this footage, and maybe more, was shot for Sun Kist but for reasons unknown picked up and distributed by Reelcraft. At any rate Hardy had worked with Dick Smith at Vitagraph and remained a good friend of the family for many years.

Alice's other circulating Reelcraft short, and perhaps her best surviving film, is CINDERELLA CINDERS ('20). She plays a waitress/cook at a crummy diner who gets fired and ends up as a maid for a wealthy family. For a society party Alice and the butler (Dick Smith) are enlisted to pose as the Count and Countess De Bunco, who are actually crooks. Of course the whole thing ends in confusion with Alice saving the day. Really the whole show, Alice is hilarious as she primps and flirts with the customers in the diner, at one point even putting up a musical chart and conducting their loud soup slurpings. Other highlights include a rollicking chase where Alice races to get a position, using her feet, a bicycle, and roller skates pulled by a bulldog to beat a horde of out-of-work maids from getting there first, and a fruity fancy dance exhibition with Dick Smith where their spoofs of ballroom dancing probably date back to their vaudeville act. CINDERELLA CINDERS was shot in Chicago, but after Emerald became part of Reelcraft, Alice and company moved back to Hollywood for the remainder of the series. The Howell films were profitable, but unfortunately much of the other Reelcraft product wasn't, and the company went bankrupt and



Alice and Phil Dunham object to Frank J. Coleman's method of flossing in an unidentified L-KO or Century Comedy.

Photo from the author's collection

THE MOVING PICTURE WEEKLY

CENTURY COMEDY PRESENTS

Alice Howell

IN

THE SIDE SPLITTING RIOT

"She did her bit"



Book thru any branch of the

LONGACRE DISTRIBUTING CO.

Home Office Mecca Building, New York

folded in 1921.

Suddenly at liberty, Alice appeared in small, comic relief roles in two features, *LOVE IS AN AWFUL THING* ('22) and *WANDERING DAUGHTERS* ('23), and began her last starring series of shorts back at Universal. Boy wonder Irving Thalberg is said to have initiated a plan to create new comedy shorts to compete with other studios. Alice's new series teamed her with Neely Edwards and Bert Roach in domestic comedies about a married couple (Alice & Neely) and their goofy butler (Roach).

Alice's character was still addled and had her trademark hair and walk, but had graduated to a comfortable, upper-middle class status. No longer mopping or slaving at beanerys, she takes care of the nice home while hubby works, and traded in her old mis-matched costume for more flattering and up-to-date attire. Similar in tone to the earlier films of Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Drew and Mr. & Mrs. Carter DeHaven, the series still managed to work in generous helpings of slapstick, and at one reel were short and sweet. Dick Smith had directed most of the Reelcraft shorts, and alternated writing and directing this series with William Watson. Other writers included Norman Taurog and Archie Mayo.

Three entries from this series still exist. *THAT'S THE SPIRIT* ('24) details the trio's (with comic Billy Bletcher filling in for Neely Edwards) misadventures as they attempt to photograph a ghost with a special "spiritualistic" camera. In *ONE WET NIGHT* ('24) torrential California rains turn the household upside-down in it's efforts to stay high and dry. The expected watery chaos occurs at the end of the film after guest Tiny Sandford blows a hole in the ceiling allowing the rains to pour in, but earlier Alice has some cute, quiet moments with her pampered little dog who helps her knit and talk on the phone to "Daddy" at work. The best of the three is *UNDER A SPELL* ('25). Alice suspects Neely of sneaking a woman into the house and hires "Professor Svengoolash, A.T.C.M.V." to hypnotize hubby and get the truth. Svengoolash makes Neely think he's a monkey but then gets knocked

out. Neely escapes and his ape antics, along with Alice and butler Roach's attempts to lure him back home, provide the films funniest moments. After Svengoolash revives and cancels his monkey spell it's revealed that Alice's suspected other woman is actually "The Bobbed Hair Bandit" – a burglar who robs houses in drag, which gets Neely off the hook for a happy ending. Director Dick Smith keeps the pace moving and the absurdities building for a very entertaining ten minutes. Also while making this series Alice appeared in an unbilled cameo, performing some of her eccentric dancing, in the Universal feature *BUTTERFLY* ('24) directed by Clarence Brown.

In the mid-1920's Alice retired. The latest title I've been able to turn up is *MADAME DYNAMITE* an Imperial Comedy released by Fox sometime in 1926. Dick Smith continued directing and writing, at least to the end of the silent era, and her daughter Yvonne had a brief career appearing in shorts and a few features. At a get-together at Oliver Hardy's home Yvonne met George Stevens, who at that time was a cameraman on the Hal Roach lot. The couple married, and Alice's only grandchild, the American Film Institute's director-general George Stevens Jr., was born in 1932.

When Alice left films she still had a solid following. In fact around that time Hal Roach produced a short, *SURE, MIKE* ('25), that's practically a homage (or a total rip-off). Martha Sleeper, playing an Irish shop girl working in a department store, wears the basic Howell costume and even does specific gags from Alice's films. This same costume would turn up again at the Roach lot worn by Marion Byron in two of her comedies with Anita Garvin – *FEED 'EM AND WEEP* ('28) and *GOING GAGA* ('29). But after the change-over to sound, silent films were looked on as ancient history or curios, and many former favorites who weren't currently visible in talkies were forgotten. When Dick Smith died, about ten years after Alice retired, his obituary said:

RICHARD SMITH

Dick Smith, 50, comedy writer-director of silent pictures, died of pneumonia, Feb. 7, in Los Angeles. Widow survives.

Variety Feb., 10, 1937

This was Variety, the main industry paper, and it didn't bother to mention who the widow was (or had been). Whether or not this kind of neglect bothered Alice isn't known, although her daughter has been quoted as saying that her career in show business didn't mean that much to her mother, that it was more "of a means to an end." Having invested well in California real estate, Alice lived comfortably managing her holdings until her death on April 11, 1961.

The revival of interest in silent comedy began in the late 1950's. Because Alice's films weren't available she never appeared in anything like a Robert Youngson compilation feature, and so she ended up as no more than a name in comedy history books. Today roughly twenty of her films are known to exist in some form or another. After all the skill and hard work that Alice Howell put into her comedies it seems that time has played a mean trick by letting most of them disappear. But as lost silents still continue to turn up perhaps fate will become a little kinder and allow a few more of her films to be found so that comedy fans and scholars can judge her unique talents for themselves.

ALICE ON VIDEO

For readers interested in taking a look at Alice, Kino Video included her *ONE WET NIGHT* on the Funny Ladies box in their Slapstick Encyclopedia series. Grapevine Video in Phoenix, AZ offers *ONE WET NIGHT*, *CINDERELLA CINDERS*, and *UNDER A SPELL* on different collections, while Bill Sprague in Vermont has *SHOT IN THE EXCITEMENT*, *ONE WET NIGHT*, *UNDER A SPELL*, and *CINDERELLA CINDERS*. The Keystone Chaplin shorts that she appeared in are widely

available with Grapevine Video and Bill Sprague having a full selection.

Since comedy shorts weren't given much attention or respect this may be just the tip of the iceberg of Alice Howell's total number of films. If anyone has any additional titles or information please contact me: Steve Massa, 311 E. 93rd Street, #4S, NYC 10128, (212) 289-1987.

My thanks to Mike Abadi, Robert Arkus, Rob Farr, Rich Finnegan, Cole Johnson, Mark Johnson, Ben Model, Joe Moore, Bruce Lawton, Steve Rydzewski, & Henry Zorn. Special thanks to Mary Corliss & Teri Geeskin at the Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive, & especially James Kotslibas-Davis for the generous selections from his incredible collection of movie ads.

Key sources for the following filmography were:

The Universal Silents: A Filmography of the Universal Motion Picture Manufacturing Company, 1912-1926, by Richard E. Braff (McFarland & Company, Inc. 2000)

The Bulls Eye/Reelcraft Filmography compiled by Robert Farr & Joe Moore. MUGSHOTS, a great website maintained by Rob Farr at: <http://home.netcom.com/~lippfarr/bullseye.htm>

Filmography Key:

PD=Producer, Dist.= Distributor, D=Director, C=Cast, Rls=reels,

*=Known to be extant ©=copyright date A=Author

BerSF=Staatliches Filmarchiv DER DDR, Berlin

BUD=Magyar Filmintezet/Filmarchivum, Hungary

CUBA=Cinemateca De Cuba

DEN=DET Danske Filmmuseum, Denmark

EH=George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

LOC=Library of Congress, Washington, DC

LON=National of Film Archive, London

MOMA=Museum of Modern Art, New York

MUN=Filmmuseum/Munchner Stadtmuseum, Deutschland

OTTA=National Film, Television and Sound Archive, Canada

QUEB=La Cinematheque Quebecoise, Canada



Photo courtesy Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive

1914

Caught in a Cabaret* (4/27/1914) 2rls. PD: Keystone. Dist: Mutual. D:Charlie Chaplin & Mabel Normand. C:Charlie Chaplin, Mabel Normand, Alice Davenport, Harry McCoy, Chester Conklin, Mack Swain, Alice Howell, Minta Durfee, Edgar Kennedy, Eva Nelson. (CUBA/DEN/LON/QUEB/MUN/MOMA)

Caught in the Rain* (5/4/1914) 1rl. PD: Keystone. Dist: Mutual. D:Charlie Chaplin. C:Charlie Chaplin, Mack Swain, Alice Davenport, Alice Howell, Grover Ligon. (CUBA/LON)

The Knockout* (6/11/1914) 2rls. PD:Keystone. Dist:Mutual. D:Roscoe Arbuckle. C:Roscoe Arbuckle, Minta Durfee, Hank Mann, Charlie Chaplin, Mack Swain, Edgar Kennedy, Al St. John, Alice Howell, Grover Ligon, Luke, Rube Miller, Slim Summerville, Mack Sennett. (CUBA/DEN/LON/LOC/MOMA)

Laughing Gas* (7/9/1914) 1rl. PD:Keystone. Dist:Mutual. D:Charlie Chaplin. C:Charlie Chaplin, Slim Summerville, Alice Howell, Mack Swain, Joseph Swickard. (CUBA/DEN/LON/OTTA/QUEB/LOC)

Hello Mabel* (10/8/1914) 1rl. PD:Keystone. Dist:Mutual. C:Mabel Normand, Mack Swain, Alice Davenport, Harry McCoy, Charles Parrott, Alice Howell, Emma Clifton, Minta Durfee, Al St. John, Phyllis Allen.

Shot in the Excitement* (10/26/1914) 1rl. PD:Keystone. Dist: Mutual. C:Alice Howell, Al St. John, Rube Miller.

Cursed by His Beauty* (10/31/1914) 1rl. PD:Keystone. Dist:Mutual. C:Charlie Murray, Alice Davenport, Alice Howell, Slim Summerville, Phyllis Allen, Harry McCoy, Charles Parrott.

Tillie's Punctured Romance* (11/14/1914) 6rls. PD:Keystone. Dist:Alco Film Corp. D:Mack Sennett. A:Hampton Del Ruth. C:Marie Dressler, Charlie Chaplin, Mabel Normand, Mack Swain, Harry McCoy, Chester Conklin, Glen Cavender, Nick Cogley, Charles Parrott, Edgar Kennedy, Alice Howell, Phyllis Allen, Minta Durfee, Charlie Murray, Bill Hauber, May Wells, Alice Davenport. (BerSF/BUD/LON)

(Alice is often listed in the casts for Mabel's Married Life and His Musical Career. The part of Mrs. Rich in His Musical Career is played by Cecile Arnold, and Mack Swain's wife in Mabel's Married Life is definitely not Alice and she appears nowhere else in surviving prints.)

1915

Their Last Haul (2/21/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. D:John G. Blystone. C:Hank Mann, Alice Howell, Wallace MacDonald.

Rough but Romantic (3/17/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. D:John G. Blystone. C:Harry Mann, Alice Howell, Jenny Rand, Gertrude Selby. ©3/8/1915

Life and Moving Pictures (7/28/1915) 2rl. PD: L-KO. Dist:Universal. D:Henry Lehrman. C:Harry Gribbon, Mae Emory, Henry Lehrman, Alice Howell, Billie Ritchie, Gertrude Selby, Henry Bergman. ©7/20/1915

In the Claw of the Law (8/4/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. C:Fatty Voss, Peggy Pearce, Alice Howell, Harry Gribbon. ©7/17/1915.

Under New Management (10/13/1915) 2rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. D:Henry Lehrman. C:Gertrude Selby, Gene Rogers, Alice Howell, Raymond Griffith, Fatty Voss. ©10/8/1915.

Room and Board - A Dollar and a Half (10/20/1915) 2rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. D:Henry Lehrman. C:Billie Ritchie, Louise Orth, Henry Bergman, Alice Howell. ©10/14/1915.

Tears and Sunshine (10/27/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO Dist:Universal. C:Gene Rogers, Raymond Griffith, Alice Howell, Gertrude Selby. ©10/20/1915

Cupid and the Scrub Lady (11/7/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. C:Alice Howell, Fatty Voss. ©10/29/1915.

Her Ups and Downs (11/7/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. C:Alice Howell, Fatty Voss.

Silk Hose and High Pressure* (11/8/1915) 3rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. D:Henry Lehrman. C:Billie Ritchie, Gene Rogers, Henry Bergman, Alice Howell, Louise Orth. ©10-30-1915. (LOC)

Sin on the Sabbath* (12/8/1915) 2rl. PD:L-KO. Dist:Universal. C:Billie Ritchie, Louise Orth, Gene Rogers, Alice Howell, Reggie Morris. ©12/1/1915. (MOMA/DEN).

Lizzie's Shattered Dreams (12/12/1915) 1rl. PD:L-KO. Dist: Universal. C:Alice Howell, Fatty Voss, Charles Winninger. ©12/3/1915.

From Beanery to Billions (12/22/15) 2rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith ©12/15/15

1916

Flirtation a la Carte (1/16/16) 1 rl. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Dick Smith, Alice Howell, Phil Dunham, Fatty Voss ©1/7/16

Her Naughty Eyes (2/9/16) 1 rl. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith, Harry Coleman ©2/2/16

Dad's Dollars and Dirty Doings (2/27/16) 1 rl. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith, Phil Dunham. ©2/18/1916.

The Doubles Troubles (4/16/16) 2 rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith, Billy Bevan, Harry Coleman. ©4/7/16.

The Great Smash (5/10/16) 3 rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith, Raymond Griffith, Billy Bevan. ©5/3/16

A Busted Honeymoon (5/24/16) 1 rl. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Raymond Griffith, Fatty Voss. ©5/17/16

How Stars Are Made* (6/17/16) 2 rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Ray Griffith, Dick Smith, Fatty Voss. ©6/6/16 (LON)

Pirates of the Air (6/28/16) 2 rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Fatty Voss, Billy Bevan, Phil Dunham, Joe Moore. ©6/20/16

Lizzie's Lingering Love (7/25/16) 3 rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. D: Henry Lehrman. C: Alice Howell, Fatty Voss, Phil Dunham, Billy Bevan. ©7/15/16

Unhand Me, Villian! (9/9/16) 1 rl. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Joseph Moore, Fatty Voss. ©8/2/16

Alice In Society (11/11/16) 3 rls. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Joseph Moore, Fatty Voss, Phil Dunham. ©10/26/16

Tattle-Tale Alice (12/1/16) 1 rl. PD: L-KO. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell. ©11/21/16

1917

Balloonatics (1917) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell

Automaniacs (1917) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell

Neptune's Naughty Daughter (1917) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell

Her Barebacked Career (aka Alice of the Sawdust) (1917) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell

She Did Her Bit (1917) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell

What's the Matter With Father? (1917) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell

1918

Oh, Baby! (2/15/18) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell

Her Unmarried Life (5/29/18) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell, Hughie Mack ©5/9/18

In Dutch* (6/26/18) PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell. ©5/24/18 (LOC)

The Choo Choo Love (7/17/18) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell, Hughie Mack, Russell Powell, Neal Burns, Billy Armstrong, Edith Kelly. ©6/27/18

Hey, Doctor! (8/13/18) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell, Eddie Barry, Russell Powell, Neal Burns, Billy Armstrong, Edith Kelly ©7/24/18

Bawled Out (8/14/18) 2rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: James Davis. C: Alice Howell, Hughie Mack, Vin Moore, Helen Gibson. ©8/17/18

Hoot Toot (8/28/18) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: James Davis. C: Alice Howell. ©8/6/18

Untamed Ladies (10/9/18) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell. ©9/30/18



Illustration from the author's collection

The Cabbage Queen (12/18/18) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Hughie Mack, Phil Dunham. ©12/3/18

1919

Society Stuff (3/12/19) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. D: Vin Moore. C: Alice Howell. ©3/3/19

Behind the Front* (3/15/19) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell, Hughie Mack. ©1/29/19 (LON)

The Beauty and the Boob (8/9/19) 2 rls. PD: Century. Dist: Universal. C: Alice Howell. ©6/4/19

1920

Distilled Love* (April 1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. (May have been shot by L-KO in 1918 but distributed by Reelcraft for states rights release in 1920. Also known as A Mere Man's Love) C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith, Oliver Hardy, Rae Godfrey

Cinderella Cinders* (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Fredric J. Ireland. C: Alice Howell, Dick Smith. (E.H.)

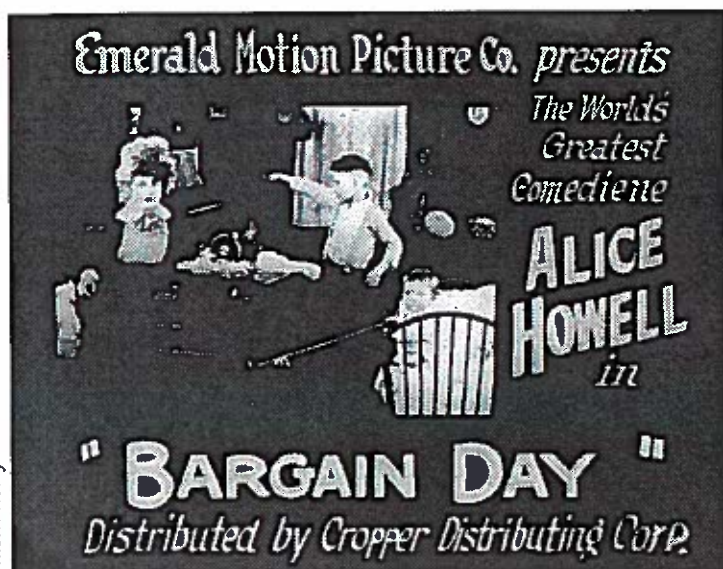
Her Lucky Day (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell

Bargain Day (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell

Rubes and Romances (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell

Lunatics in Politics* (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell
(Lost film FOUND! as this article went to print!)

Good Night Nurse (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell



Convict's Happy Bride (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell
 Squirrel Time (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell
 A Wooden Legacy (1920) 2 rls. Dist: Reelcraft. C: Alice Howell

1922

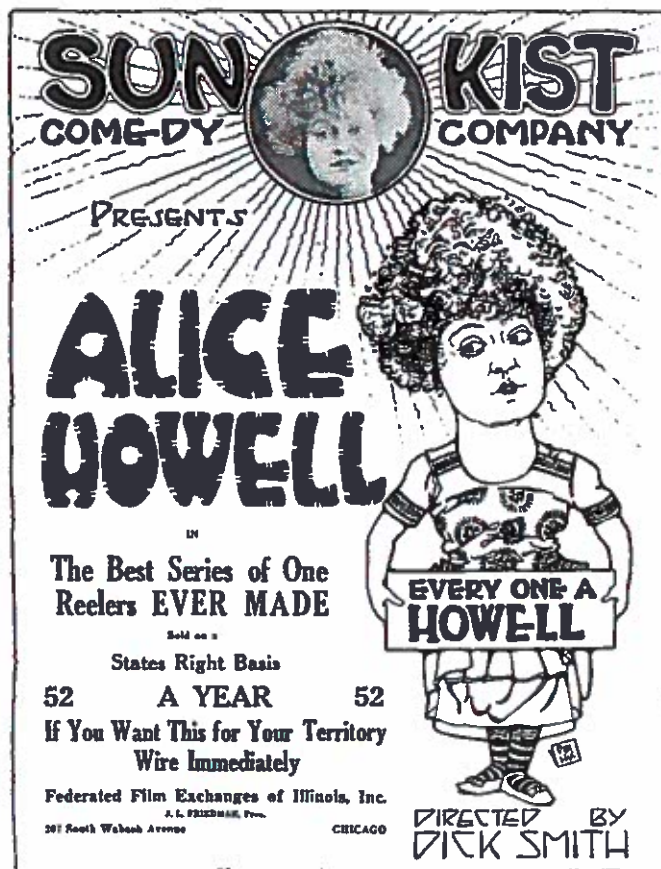
Love is an Awful Thing (Aug 30 or Sept 15, 1922) 7 rls. PD: Lewis J. Selznick/Owen Moore Film Corp. Dist: Selznick Distributing Corp. D & WR: Victor Heerman. PH: Jules Cronjager. C: Owen Moore (Anthony Churchill), Thomas Guise (Judge Griggs), Marjorie Daw (Helen Griggs), Kathryn Perry (Ruth Allen), Arthur Hoyt (Harold Wright), Douglas Carter (Porter), Charlotte Mineau (Marion), Snitz Edwards (Superintendent), Alice Howell (His Wife).

1923

Wandering Daughters (7/1/23) ©5/20/23. 6rls. Presented by Sam E. Rork. Dir & Sc: James Young. Titles: Lenore J. Coffee. Ph: George Benoit. Asst. Dirs: James Ewens & Clifford Saum. Cast: Marguerite De La Motte (Bessie Bowden), William V. Mong (Will Bowden, her father), Mabel Van Buren (Annie Bowden, her mother), Marjorie Daw (Geraldine Horton), Noah Beery (Charles Horton, her father), Pat O'Malley (John Hargraves), Allan Forrest (Austin Trull), Alice Howell (servant in the Bowden home).

1924

Marry When Young (4/5/24) ©3/14/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D: Wm. H. Watson. A: Richard Smith. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards.
 Spring of 1964 (4/12/24) ©3/21/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards.
 One Wet Night* (4/26/24) ©3/28/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Neely Edwards, Bert Roach, Tiny Sandford (EH).
 Why Pay Your Rent? (5/19/24) ©6/4/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards, Harold Austin.
 Why Be Jealous? (6/23/24) ©6/4/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Harold Austin.
 Bluffing Bluffers (7/2/24) ©6/28/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Harold Austin.
 Patching Things Up (7/19/24) ©6/25/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Harold Austin.
 Women's Rights (7/23/24) ©7/14/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Harold Austin.



Fair and Windy (8/4/24) ©7/19/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Harold Austin.
 Way Up North (8/18/24) ©8/2/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach.
 That's the Spirit* (9/1/24) ©8/20/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Billy Bletcher. (LOC).
 The Game Hunter (9/17/24) ©8/30/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: William H. Watson. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards.
 Butterfly* (10/12/24) ©8/24/24. 8rls. PD: Universal-Jewel. Presented by Carl Laemmle. D: Clarence Brown. Sc: Olga Printzlau. Ph: Ben Reynolds. Cast: Laura LaPlante (Dora Collier), Ruth Clifford (Hilary Collier), Kenneth Harlan (Craig Spaulding), Norman Kerry (Konrad Kronski), Cesare Gravina (Von Mandescheid), Margaret Livingston (Violet Van De Wort), Freeman Wood (Cecil Atherton), T. Roy Barnes (Cy Dwyer), Alice Howell (Eccentric dancer at party).
 Green Tees (11/10/24) ©10/28/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D: Richard Smith. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards.

1925

Under A Spell* (1/6/25) ©12/19/24. 1rl. PD: Universal. D: Richard Smith. C: Alice Howell, Neely Edwards, Bert Roach (LOC).
 Papa's Pet (3/2/25) Bull's Eye Comedy Series #2 ©2/26/25. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: Richard Smith. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards.
 Tenting Out (3/23/25) Bull's Eye Comedy Series #4 ©3/9/25. 1rl. PD: Universal. D & A: Richard Smith. C: Alice Howell, Bert Roach, Neely Edwards.
 Sleeping Sickness (3/30/25) Bull's Eye Comedy Series #5 ©2/26/25. 1rl. PD: Universal. D: Richard Smith. C: Alice Howell, Neely Edwards, Bert Roach.

1926

Madame Dynamite* (1926) Imperial Comedies. PD: Fox Films. D: Zion Myers & Gene Forde. C: Alice Howell, Eddie Clayton (EH).

Who's Who In The Chaplin Keystones...

Who Plays the Maid In Cruel, Cruel Love?

By Bo Berglund

Why is the Chaplin Keystone Filmography in such a sorry state – so imperfect & unreliable? Well, the simple explanation is that no credits were ever published; even an original Keystone print never carried any cast list – before the Triangle period, that is, which means September 1915. What we have is to a large extent the result of pure guesswork. People have thought they recognized a certain actor or actress, & mostly have those surmises, those more or less – often less – educated guesses been taken for facts.

On closer inspection we can discern that the actress playing the maid in *Cruel, Cruel Love* also plays Chester Conklin's girlfriend in *Twenty Minutes of Love* & Mack Swain's wife in *Mabel's Married Life*. If we take a look in the filmographies to see who the actress is who plays these roles we get different answers: Alice Davenport, Emma Clifton, Alice Howell. None is correct. But who is it then?

Eva Nelson is a name you won't find in any Keystone or Mack Sennett filmography. But those who have more than a superficial knowledge of American film comedy in the teens will immediately recognize her as an L-KO player along with Billie Ritchie, Gertrude Selby, Louise Orth, etc... She is, however, in no reference book, old or new, in no studio directory, no necrology, so to learn anything more about Eva Nelson seems to be nearly impossible. There is no record of her having worked for the Keystone Company, & appearances are deceptive, as we know. So, in order not to make yet another mistake of "inventing" credits & just replace one error with another, can we be absolutely sure that it is Eva Nelson playing these roles & not someone who merely resembles her? Yes, we

can, for I have indeed found proof.

In *The Motion Picture Weekly* of December 25, 1915, page 5, there is an article headlined: "Dancing Into Pictures from Texas to the L-KO. An interview with Eva Nelson by Mlle. Chic." Here we learn that she was born twenty-two years ago (i.e. in 1893). Stage struck, she went to San Francisco & appeared in musical comedy. There she also studied dancing & then she danced for several seasons in vaudeville. Having moved to Los Angeles, she got a chance to join the Keystone Company. "Mr. Lehrman gave me my first lead," she says, "and this was opposite Roscoe Arbuckle in a film called *"A Rural Demon"* (released March 19, 1914).

"Later on, when Mr. Lehrman formed his own company, he had not forgotten the girl of *"The Rural Demon"* and I joined the L-KO (i.e. late in July 1914)."

And the chronology tallies with her story because *Cruel, Cruel Love* was released on March 26, *Twenty Minutes of Love* on April 20, *Mabel's Married Life* on June 20, & she is not to be seen in any Keystone film made later in the fall of 1914, but she appears in the very first L-KO release in October 1914, *Love and Surgery*.

In 1917 she went to Fox & appeared in Sunshine Comedies. After that she disappears from view. What then happened to her & when she died, we don't know.

Since an Evelyn is sometimes called Eva for short (for example, Eva (Evelyn) Thatcher who plays the cook in Chaplin's Mutual *The Count*, 1916) she should not be confused with Evelyn Nelson who died in Los Angeles on June 16, 1923 – suicide by gas asphyxiation. She was an Arizona girl, born in 1899, and played both in comedies and Westerns, and she can be seen in *Don't Park Here*, a 1919 Bull's Eye comedy with Harry Mann (doing his Chaplin imitation), Monty Banks, and Charles Dorety. Charley Chase directed this film which was made available to collectors in the 1970's by Blackhawk Films, Inc.

Bo Berglund

Malmö January 15, 2001

P.S. – After finishing this article, I found a short note which was scribbled in the darkness of the Gosfilmofond projection room outside Moscow in May 1992 while a 35mm print of *CAUGHT IN A CABARET* was being screened, and the note only says: CIC Eva Nelson dancing.

There are several dancing couples, but they are all in the background. Nevertheless I took out my own Blackhawk Super 8mm print of the film to see whether it is possible to recognize Eva even without having recourse to a 35mm print. And we are lucky because after Charlie has rendered the thug (Mack Swain) harmless by hitting him on the head with a big mallet, everybody comes forward – and closer to the camera – to thank Charlie, and there she is, just behind Charlie, to the left; to the right is a taller girl in a peaked cap. The face of Eva Nelson is seen above Charlie's right shoulder.



Who's Who In The Chaplin Keystones...

Who Plays the Boyfriend of Vivian Edwards in Those Love Pangs? or Trying to Catch a Glimpse of the Elusive Mr. Fishback

By Bo Berglund

When did Fred Fishback join the Keystone Company? It is on record that from early 1916 he directed for Sennett, but was he there in 1914? Can he be seen in any of the Chaplin Keystones? And what does Fred look like?

For a very long time I scoured lots of books and trade papers trying to find a photo of Fishback, but it was all in vain. Kalton C. Lahue mentions him in Mack Sennett's Keystone, 1971, as a portly gentleman and says that when Sennett wanted a fat cop he used Fred Fishback or Mack Swain. Then, in 1979, Baby Peggy, now known as Diana Serra Cary, published her book Hollywood's Children in which she says that Fred Fishback was a tall, handsome man with bright blue eyes and dark hair. Well, was he tall or fat? Or both?? Or neither??? But – lo and behold! – here is even a photo and the caption reads: "With Fred Fishback on the set of *The Kid Reporter*, a 1921 two-reeler." So now we know what he looks like! I was overjoyed at having finally found a photo of him. Knowing the Chaplin Keystones quite well, I had been convinced that as soon as I saw the photo I should immediately rec-

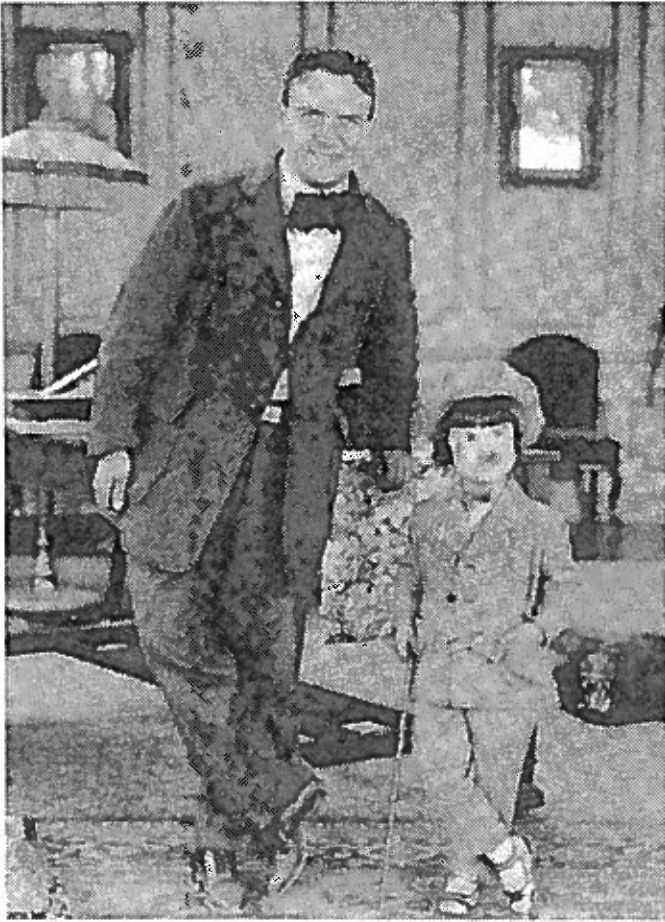


ognize him from the films. But I did not. What a disappointment! So, either he was not at Keystone in 1914, or, if he was, he did not work with Chaplin.

Let us go back and take a second look at the photo and the caption. *The Kid Reporter* is a 1923 two-reeler, not 1921. In the picture we see a man that is not tall nor fat but of average height and build. To a small child, however, every adult is of course a giant. This photo lead me astray and put me on the wrong track for quite a while because the man is in fact not Fred Fishback, nor Alf Goulding, the director of *The Kid Reporter*. I do not know who this person is, but it is not Fishback. How do I know? How can I be so sure? Because I found proof that Fred actually did work with Chaplin at Keystone in 1914. In the Moving Picture World of December 14, 1918, age 1184, we read: "Fred Fishback...is now a member of the staff of directors producing Sunshine Comedies under the general supervision of Henry Lehrman. Mr Fishback's early experience was with Thomas Ince. – Later he joined the Mack Sennett forces and played opposite to Charlie Chaplin." So the search started all over again. It was thanks to Warren M. Sherk of the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles that I at long last got to see a true photo of Fishback. Ten years ago, in 1991, Warren sent me a copy of a memorial article by Addison Burkart published in the Filmograph of July 11, 1925, and here is a portrait of Fred Fishback. And now happened what I had expected all the time: I immediately recognized him as the boyfriend of Vivian Edwards in *Those Love Pangs*. And he is tall and not fat. Fred is thus the guy in the cinema who at the very end of the film throws Chaplin through the white screen.

Fishback also plays two different butlers/servants in *Tillie's Punctured Romance*. One of them can be seen in The (Complete) Films of Charlie Chaplin by Gerald McDonald, et al, on page 76; here he is the wigged servant to the extreme left, and in the lower still on the same page he is seen beside the armour in the background. He also plays the butler, now without a wig, who opens the door for Mabel and lets her in when she applies for the job as a maid. He is then very prominent in the rest of the film on the set with a punch-bowl placed up front to the right. Fred also appears in *Gentleman of Nerve*. On page 71 in the same book, he is again seen at the extreme left, behind the fence, and, in the lower still, in a white cap, behind Mabel Normand.

In the dentist's waiting room in *Laughing Gas* there is a bearded patient. I tentatively suggest that it is Fred Fishback hidden behind that big, hideous black beard and bushy eyebrows. Of this I cannot be 100% sure, but both



the build of the man and the few visible facial features make it highly probable.

Originally Fred's name was of course Fischback, but there are many spelling variations such as Fishbach, Fishbeck; most often, however, it is Fishback. Born in Bucharest, Rumania, in 1894, Fred came to New York and had various jobs before he eventually ended up in Los Angeles and joined Thomas Ince; here he worked as a cowboy with "Shorty" Hamilton. Then he went to the Sennett lot where he was a property man and a stunt man before he became an assistant to Roscoe Arbuckle from whom he (like Buster Keaton) says he learned the rudiments of filmmaking. Having directed for Sennett 1916-1918, he made a couple of Fox/Sunshine

Comedies for Henry Lehrman. In the summer of 1919 he married Ethel Lynne, an actress who worked for Al Christie, and it was also in 1919 that he started to make a long series of Century Comedies. Under the Century brand he directed comedies with Brownie, the Wonder Dog, and Baby Peggy; and quite popular was the Century Lions series.

Fred Fishback was also known as Fred Hibbard. When did he change his name and why? Fred got involved in the Arbuckle scandal; he was with Fatty in San Francisco at that notorious party in the St. Francis Hotel in early September 1921. In his next film, released just a week after the scandal broke, the director's credit up on the screen read Fred Hibbard – and it stayed that way.

Fred Fishback/Hibbard was a very prolific director. In one single year, from November 1922 to November 1923, he directed twenty-six two-reel Cameo Comedies – it's a reel a week – and after that five Mermaid Comedies, of which Lige Conley is quite well known to film collectors.

Tragically, Fishback contracted cancer about this time. But he worked until the bitter end, despite his gaunt and emaciated appearance; the very last film he is said to have directed from the sick-bed. He was now working with Lloyd Hamilton for whom he directed seven comedies in his last year. Only thirty years of age, Fishback died in January 1925, and his last two Lloyd Hamilton comedies, *Hooked* and *Half A Hero*, were released posthumously in February and March of that year.

Suppose I had stopped my search, after finding the first photo of Fishback, I should then have been convinced that Fred Fishback never appeared in any of the Chaplin Keystone.

Hence – caveat lector! – reader, beware of misidentifications because a wrong caption, which seems to be rather an innocuous thing, may have far-reaching consequences.

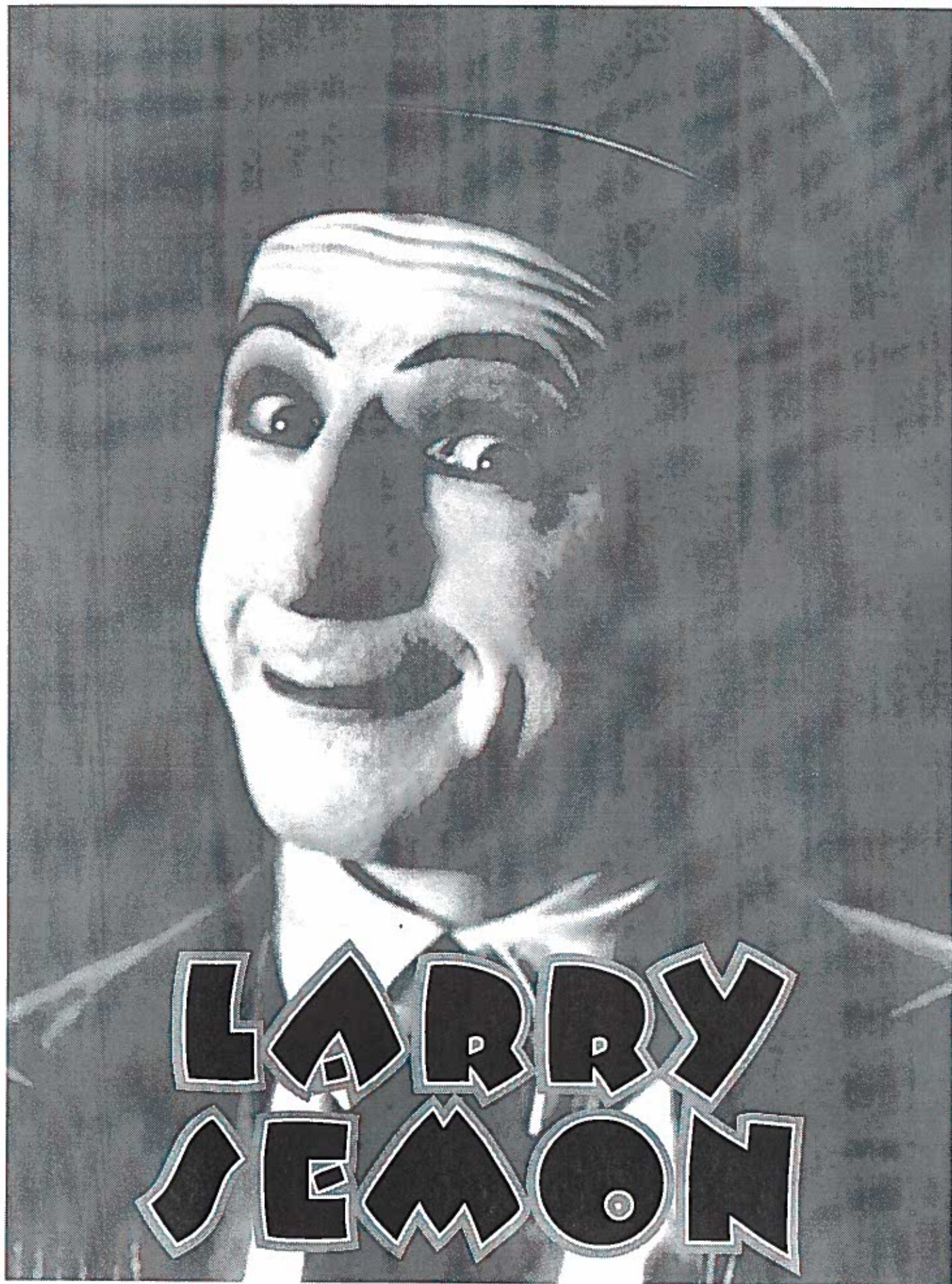
Malmo January 25, 2001

Bo Berglund

The Magazine Devoted to the Appreciation, Documentation & Preservation of Early Film Comedy

SlapStick!

BE SURE TO CATCH THE NEXT ISSUE, JANUARY 2002



Larry Semon Films and Their Foreign Titles

Compiled by Claudia Sassen

PART TWO

A Quick-Reference Guide To Larry Semon's Nicknames:

Argentina: Agapito

Austria: Zigotto

Catalonia: Jaimito

Czechoslovakia: Larry

France: Zigoto, Bigorno

Germany: Larry Semon/Zigotto(?)

Hungary: Zigoto

Italy: Ridolini

Mexico: Narizotas

Netherlands: Zigoto

Portugal: Joãozinho, Josésito

Spain: Tomasín

Larry Semon Films and their Foreign Titles

Unless marked otherwise, this filmography lists all titles of Semon films¹ which are named by the copyright & release synopses of the Special Collections-URL UCLA¹⁸. The original titles are juxtaposed with the titles of foreign cinema & television releases. Foreign titles were taken from film copies, early film magazines^{3,13,14}, film books^{6,8,10,12,13}, & lists released by Italian & German boards of censor^{4,17}. The foreign versions were identified by viewing films, consulting archivists, synopsis, intertitle lists & programs of retrospectives^{24,9}.

Underscored titles are versions known to be extant. Release dates with a question mark were taken from Davide Turconi's Semon filmography¹⁷, as some sheets from the Vitagraph files did not have dates. Wherever a foreign title could not unequivocally be assigned, a questionmark (?) is placed.

As foreign distributors had the tendency to cling to the same semantic field when renaming Semon films it is tempting to reconstruct original titles by inference. Evidently *Pluck and Plotters* was named in France, Italy, Catalonia & Germany for the spies occurring in it. However, an identification method like this is prone to lead to fallacies as for instance the German titles *Larry der Kulissenschieber* & *Larry Semon als Kulissenschieber* denote completely different films, i.e. *The Show & Between the Acts*, respectively.

If not marked otherwise, the cast list was compiled according to the information in the release & copyright files and by viewing films. Inconsistencies in spelling were adapted deliberately.

Abbreviations

V = Verleih, distribution for German cinemas of the Twenties

S = Slapstick, TV series

MoN = Manner ohne Nerven, German TV series of the 1970's

K = Klamottenkiste, German TV series of the 1980's

LS = Let's Smile, American TV series(?)

BR = Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian radio and television)

2 Reel-Comedies (Unless specified)

Huns and Hyphens

Zigoto Vicomte par Amour (France)

Barkeeper von Blauem Blut (S), Das geheimnisvolle Dokument (V) (Germany)

Ridolini Viscomte per Amore (Italy)

Tomasín con Vida Y sin Boda (Spain)

re: Sept 23, 1918

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Greater Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Madge Kirby (Vera Bright), Stan Laurel (A Plotter), Mae Laurel (A Woman), IMDb: William McCall (Customer), Frank Alexander (Cafe owner), William Hauber (Waiter), Pete Gordon (Waiter)

Bears and Bad Men

Jaimito y Stan Laurel; Jaimito y la bestia negra (Catalonia)

Larry a medvěd (Czechoslovakia)

Zigoto chez les Pirates (France)

Larry und die Pioniere (K) (Germany)

Ridolini e la Bestia, Ridolini e la Belva Nera (Italy)

Larry Semon and the Wild Beast (LS) (USA)

re: Oct 7, 1918

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Greater Vitagraph

cast: Lawrence Semon (Larry Cutshaw), Madge Kirby (The Slawsons's daughter), Stan Laurel (Pete), William McCall (stranded actor), Blanche Payson (stranded actress) Mae Laurel (scared woman), Bessie and Brownie (Two Bears)

Frauds and Frenzies

Jaimito y Stan Laurel en petigros a granel (Catalonia)

Zigoto au Baigne (France)

Sträflinge auf Freiem Fuss (S) (Germany)

Ridolini al Bagno Penale (Italy)

Er in Gevlogen (Netherlands)

re: Nov 18, 1918

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Vitagraph and Lawrence Semon

cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Stan Laurel (Simp), Madge Kirby (Dolly Dare), William McCall (warden), Bill Hauber (prison guard)

Humbugs and Husbands

Por Meterse a Redentor, Jaimito Don Juan (Catalonia)

Zigoto Joue le Don Juan (France)

Erotik in Uniform (MoN) (Germany)

re: Dec 2, 1918

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Greater Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Madge Kirby, Blanche Payson, Bill Hauber



Pluck and Plotters

Jaimito y la Espia (Catalonia)

Zigoto et les Espions (France)

Larry und die Spione (K) (Germany)

Ridolini e le Spie (Italy)

re: Dec 23, 1918

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Greater Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (janitor), Madge Kirby (Professor's daughter), Frank Alexander (chief of gang), William McCall (gangster), Jim Donnelly (Professor), Bill Hauber & Earl Montgomery (Gangsters)

1919

Traps and Tangles

Jaimito Policia (Catalonia)

Zigoto Policier (France)

Der Detektiv in der Tonne (MoN), Das Haus der heimlichen Sünden (V) (Germany)

Ridolini e i teppisti (Italy)

Tomasín Policia (Spain)

re: Jan 20, 1919

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Greater Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (Detective Sparks), Madge Kirby (Sparks' wife), Frank Alexander (shop assistant), Vera Steadman (his girlfriend), Pete Gordon, Bill Hauber (a gangster), Jim Donnelly (Old cop)

Scamps and Scandal

Zigotto will heiraten(?) (Austria)

Zigoto se Marie(?) (France)

Larry unter der Haube (K), Larry Semon heiratet (V) (Germany)

Ridolini Prende Moglie (Italy)

re: Feb 17, 1919

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Greater Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Vera Steadman (his sweetheart), Frank Alexander (her suitor), Lucille Zintheo (later Lucille Carlisle; a guest at the wedding), Bill Hauber (policeman)

Well, I'll Be...

Larry falešným hráčem (Czechoslovakia)

Zigoto Shérif (France)

Larry der Hüter des Gesetzes (K), Der Sheriff in der Gosse

(MoN), Larry als Sheriff (Germany)

Ridolini Sceriffo (Italy)

Larry Semon Sherif (LS) (USA)

re: Apr 7, 1919

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (The Sheriff), Lucille Zintheo/Carlisle (Susie), Bill Hauber (crook), Frank Alexander

Passing the Buck

Jaimito Detective de Hotel (Catalonia)

Zigoto et la Main Noire (France)

Larry Semon und die Schwarze Hand (Germany)

Ridolini e la Mano Nera (Italy)

re: May 5, 1919

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (The house detective), Frank Alexander (The fat crook), Lucille Carlisle (His wife), Jim Donnelly (Hotel proprietor), Louise Du Pre (The manicurist), Bill Hauber (A hindoo), Pete Arrow (Another hindoo), Spencer Bell

The Star Boarder

Jaimito presidiario (Catalonia)

Larry trestancem (Czechoslovakia)

Zigoto Prisonnier Amoureux (France)

Larry in Sing Sing (K, together with His Home Sweet Home),

Larry im fidelen Gefängnis (Germany)

Ridolini a Sing Sing, Ridolini Prigioniero(?), Ridolini Presidiario (Italy)

Tomasín. Preso(?) (Spain)

Larry Semon in Sing Sing (LS) (USA)

re: June 2, 1919

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (Star Boarder and Little Joe, escaped convict), Lucille Carlisle (The Warden's Daughter), Frank Alexander (The Warden), The Beauties Squad among them Norma Shearer

His Home Sweet Home

Su Dulce Hogar (Catalonia)

Zigoto et le Collier de la Duchesse (?), La Douceur de la Foyer (France)

Larry in Sing Sing (K, together with The Star Boarder), Larry Semon und die Schwiegermutter (V), Larry und der diebische Affe(?) (Germany)

Ridolini e la Collana de la Suocera (Italy)

Larry Semon and the Monkey (LS) (USA)

re: July 7, 1919

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon

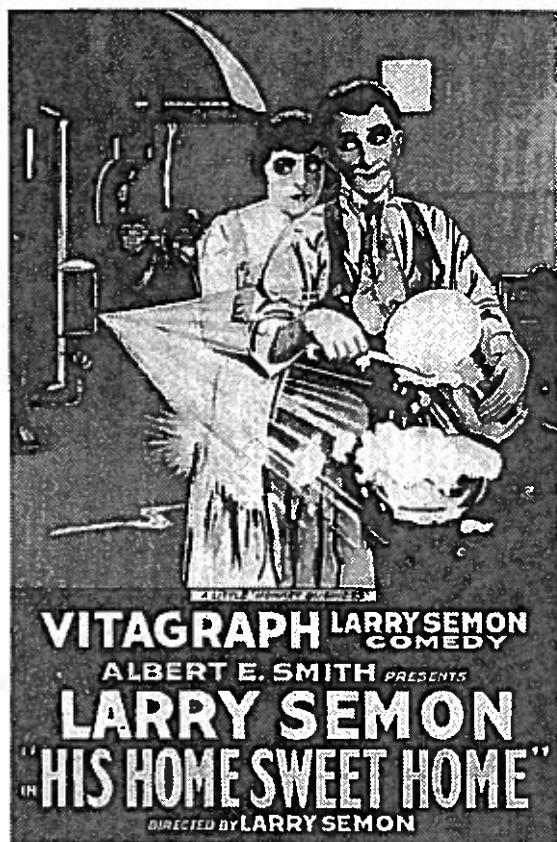
prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (The husband), Lucille Carlisle (The wife), Rose Gore (Mamma-in-law), Snookums (The trouble maker), Frank Hayes (Some family-member), Frank Alexander, Eddie Dunn, Joe Simberg (crooks), Bill Hauber (policeman)

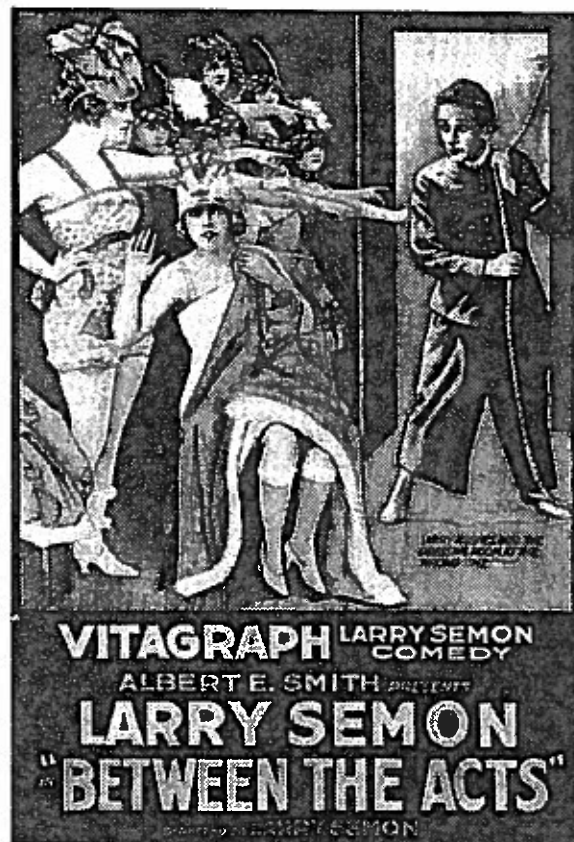
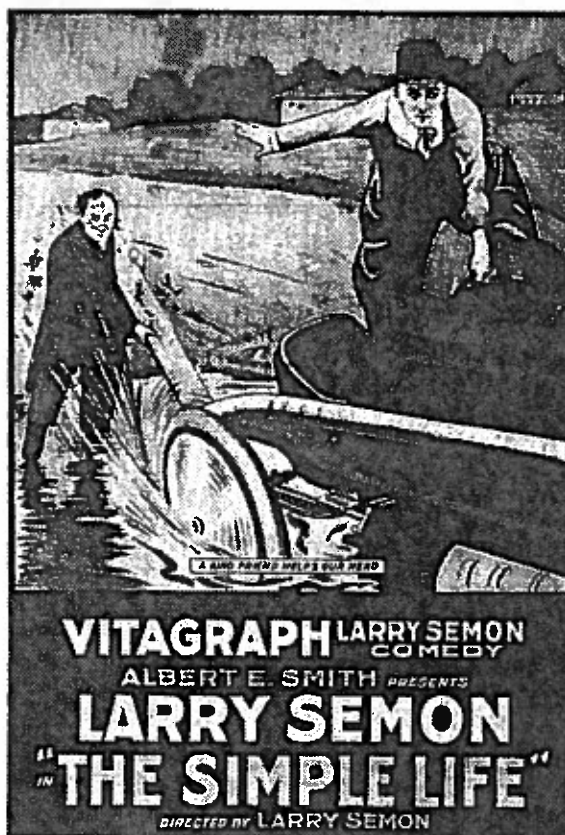
The Simple Life

Der Fluch des Feisten Farmers (MoN), Larry als Landwirt (V) (Germany)

Ridolini Garzone di Fattoria(?) (Italy) (an Italian version without title exists)



re: Aug 4, 1919
 dir: Lawrence Semon
 auth: Lawrence Semon
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (Farmer's Boy), Lucille Carlisle (Captain Tillie),
 Frank Alexander (Farmer), The Beauties Squad (Farmerettes),
 Frank Hayes (Police officer)



Between the Acts
 Zigoto Machiniste (France)
 Larry Semon als Kulissenschieber (Germany)
 Ridolini Macchinista (Italy)
 Zigoto in Het Variété (Netherlands)
 Larry Semon Engineer (LS)(USA)
 re: Sept 8, 1919
 dir: Lawrence Semon
 auth: Lawrence Semon
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Lawrence Semon (Larry, the handy man and a drunkard),
 Lucille Carlisle (manager's wife aka the vamp), Frank Alexander
 (the manager)

Dull Care

Larry der Gangsterschreck (K), Ein Wettrennen ums Glück

Larry Semon und die Apachen(?) (V) (Germany)

Ridolini e gli Apaches(?) (Italy)

Larry Semon and the Hooligans (LS) (USA)

re: Oct 6, 1919

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Lawrence Semon (Larry, the detective), Bill Hauber (The
 crooks' chief), Frank Alexander (Chief of police), Lucille
 Carlisle (His wife), Oliver Hardy (Janitor), Al Thompson, Jim
 Donnelly

Dew Drop Inn

Zigoto Douanier (France)

Larry die Schnapsnase (K), Der Sheriff im Unterrock (MoN,
 together with Trouble Brewing) (Germany)

Ridolini Doganiere (Italy)

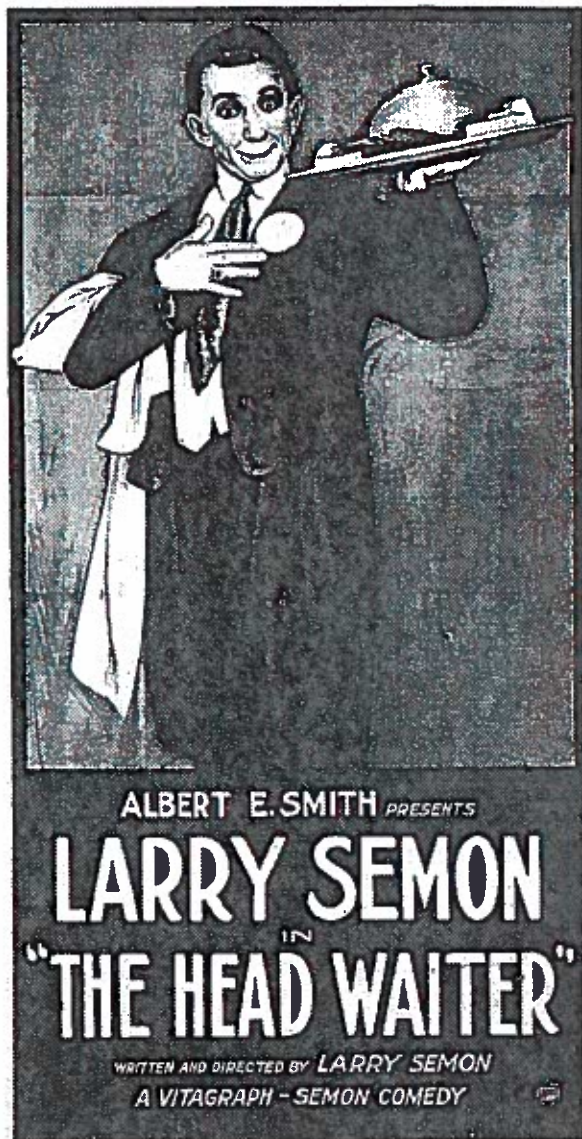
re: Nov 3, 1919

dir: Lawrence Semon

auth: Lawrence Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Lawrence Semon (Larry, the detective), Lucille Carlisle (The girl), Frank Alexander (Moonshine Mooney), The Beauties Squad (Female Follies Film Company), Frank Hayes (directress), Bill Hauber (moonshiner)



The Head Waiter

Zigoto Maitre d'Hôtel (France)

Larry Semon als Oberkellner(V) (Germany)

Ridolini Capo Cameriere Improvvisato (Italy)

Jefe de Meseros (Mexico)

re: Dec 1, 1919

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Oliver Hardy (Cop), Lucille Carlisle (Cashier), Eva Thatcher(?) (customer), Frank Alexander (ex-head waiter), Max Asher (gentleman of leisure), The Beauties Squad

1920

The Grocery Clerk

Zigoto Epicier (France)

Larry Semon belebt den Kleinhandel (V) (Germany)

Ridolini Droghiere (Italy)

re: Feb 23, 1920

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon, Lucille Carlisle (post mistress), Monte Banks (town gusher), Frank Hayes (female customer), Frank Alexander, Pete Gordon, Jack Duffy

The Fly Cop

Zigoto et le Pêril Jaune (France)

Larry in Kungfunistan (K), Larry Semon und die Gelbe Gefahr (V) (Germany)

Ridolini e la Pericolo Giallo (Italy)

Larry Semon and the Yellow Fear (LS) (USA)

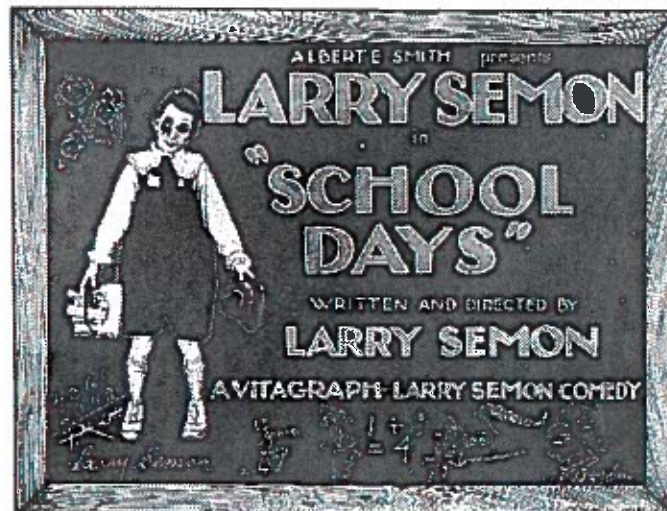
re: Mar 29, 1920

dir: Lawrence Semon, Mort S. Peebles, Norman Taurog

auth: Lawrence Semon, Mort S. Peebles, Norman Taurog

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (The Fly Cop), Lucille Carlisle (A cabaret queen), Frank Alexander (cabaret owner), Bill Hauber (crook)



School Days

Zigotto a de la Classe, Zigoto Ecolier (France)

Larry der ABC-Schütze (K), Larry Semon als Schüler (V) (Germany)

Ridolini Scolaro (Italy)

Larry Semon Scholar (LS) (USA)

re: May 3, 1920

dir: Larry Semon, Mort S. Peebles, Norman Taurog

auth: Larry Semon, Mort S. Peebles, Norman Taurog

prod: Vitagraph

cast: Larry Semon (The Hired Man), Lucille Carlisle (The daughter), Frank Alexander (Another Hired Man), Frank Hayes (The school teacher), Jack Duffy (Principal), Bill Hauber (Bad Boy)

Her First False Hare

re: May 19, 1919

dir: Charles Parrott

auth: Charles Parrott

prod: Universal Bulls-Eye

cast: Larry Semon^(*)

Solid Concrete

Zigoto dans les Carrières (France)

Larry Semon in den Steinbrüchen (Germany)

re: June 7, 1920 (according to The Bioscope and Moving Picture World Dec 6, 1920)

dir: Larry Semon
 auth: Larry Semon
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The boob), Lucille Carlisle (The boss's daughter), Bill Hauber, Frank Alexander(?)

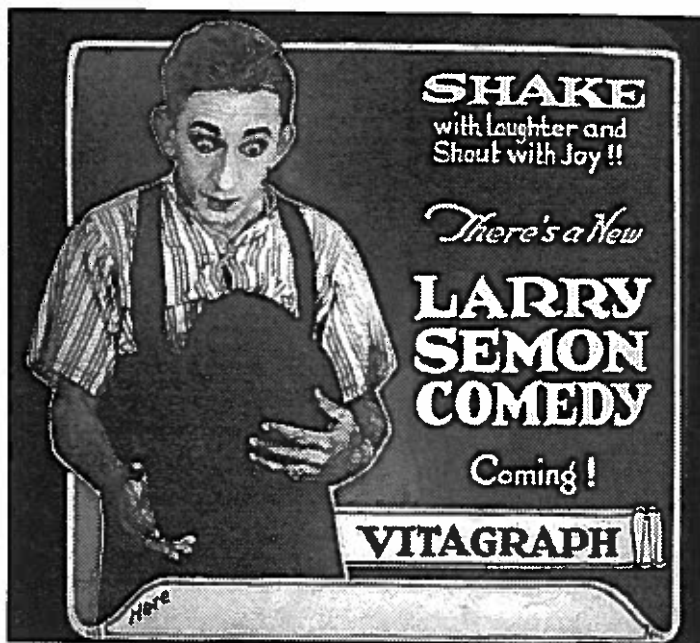
The Stage Hand

Larry kulisákem (Czechoslovakia)
Zigoto Garçon de Théâtre(?) (France)
 Larry Semon als Theaterdiener (V) (Germany)
 Ridolini Inserviente Teatrale (Italy)
 re: Sept 1920
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The stage hand), Lucille Carlisle (The leading lady), Thelma Percy (The animal trainer), Frank Alexander (Stage manager), Al Thompson (show manager), Bill Hauber ("Props"), Jack Duffy (The hero), Frank Hayes (Prima Donna), Oliver Hardy (audience member), Beauties Squad



The Suitor

Larry hledá snoubenku (Czechoslovakia)
Larry der Herzensbrecher (K), Larry Semon auf der Brautschau (V) (Germany)
Ridolini Cerca la Fidanzata (Italy)
Tomásín por su Blanca Mano (Spain)
 Larry Semon Looking for a Girl (LS) (USA)
 re: Oct 1920 or Nov/Dec 1920
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog



prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The suitor), Lucille Carlisle (an heiress), Al Thompson (A lizard), Frank Alexander (The major domo), Bill Hauber (cook), William McCall ??(father), acc. to IMDb: Frank Coghlan, Jr.

The Sportsman

Jaimito Explorador (Catalonia)
Larry im Harem (K), Im Palast der Langen Messer (MoN), Larry Semon als Naturforscher (V) (Germany)
Ridolini Esploratore (Italy)
 re: Dec 1920 or Jan/Feb 1921
 dir: Lawrence Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Lawrence Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The sportsman), Al Thompson (The tourist), Lucille Carlisle (His daughter), Frank Alexander (The sultan), Bill Hauber (Chief bodyguard), Hank Brooks (The valet)

1921

The Hick

Jaimito Juez (Catalonia)
Zigoto à la Ferme, Zigoto e le Chien Volant (France)
 Larry Semon's grosse Enttäuschung (V) (Germany)
 Ridolini Deluso(?) (Italy)
Hot Dog or The Villain Still Pursues Her (USA)
 re: Mar 10, 1921 or March/April 1921
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Maryon Aye (The farmer's daughter), Frank Alexander, Frank Hayes (guest at cabaret), Jack Duffy (farmer)

The Rent Collector

Zigoto Encaisseur, Zigoto Garçon des Recettes (France)
Larry der Pleitegeier (K), Larry Semon Kassiert die Miete (V) (Germany)
 Ridolini Esattore(?) (Italy)
Tomásín, Cobrador de Alquileres(?) (Spain)
 re: Apr 11, 1921 or May 23, 1921
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog

auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The rent collector), Norma Nichols (Leader of the society girl settlement workers), Oliver Hardy (Big boss), Eva Thatcher (The landlady), Pete Gordon (Barber), Bill Hauber
 IMDb: Frank Alexander (a thug), Leo Willis

The Bakery

Jaimito pastelero (Catalonia)
 Zigoto Boulanger (France)
Larry der Tortenspezialist (K), Der Mann, der die Backpfeifen gab (V) (Germany)
 Ridolini Pasticciere (Italy)
 Tomásín, Chico de Colmado (Spain)
 re: Apr 29, 1921 or June 20, 1921
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (bakery clerk), Oliver Hardy (foreman), Norma Nichols(?) / Florence Curtis(?) (owner's daughter), Frank Alexander (owner), Bill Hauber (worker), Grover Ligon (worker), Pete Gordon (another worker), Eva Thatcher (customer), Al Thompson, Jack Duffy

The Fall Guy

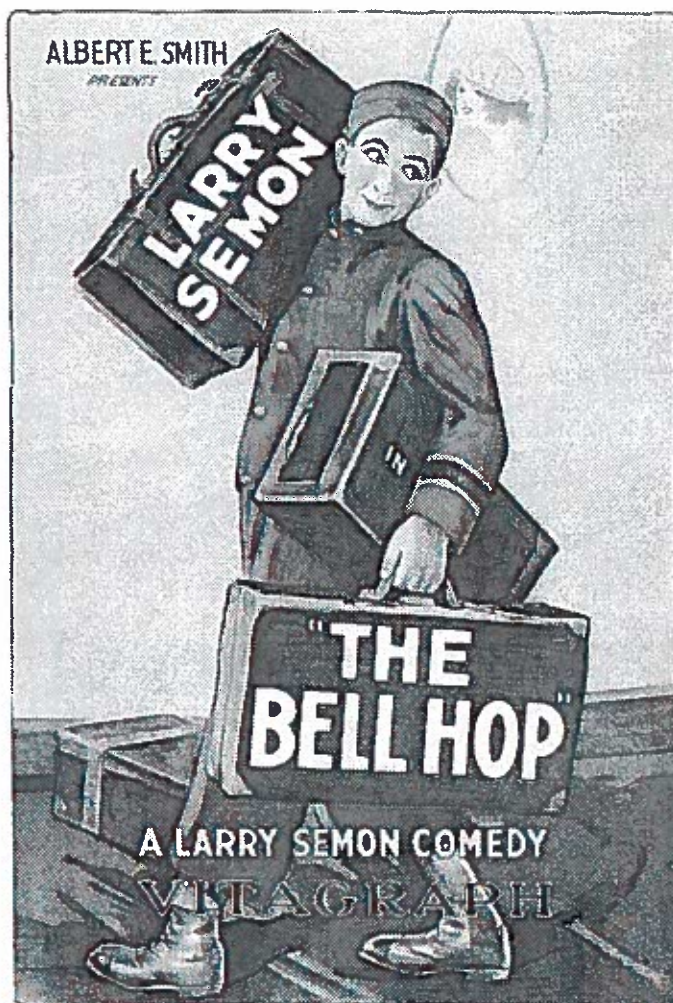
Zigoto Inspecteur(?) (France)
 Larry Semon als Polizeiinspektor (V) (Germany)
 Ridolini Ispettore(?) (Italy) (an Italian version without title exists)
 re: June 6, 1921 or July 16, 1921
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The fall guy), Norma Nichols (Prima donna), Oliver Hardy (City slicker),

The Bell Hop

Zigoto Groom (France)
Larry der Hotelbursche (K), Die besudelten Hotelgäste I/Die Störende Raumpflegerin II (MoN) (Germany) (Hungary)
Ridolini Groom, Ridolini Inserviente d'Albergo, Ridolini Inserviente d'Albergo (?) (Italy)
 re: Aug 29, 1921
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The bellhop), Norma Nichols (A detective), Oliver Hardy (Villain), Al Thompson, Pete Gordon

The Sawmill

Zigoto Bûcheron, Zigoto à la Scierie (France)
Larry in der Sägemühle (K), Martyrium eines Fabrikanten (MoN), Das Sägewerk (Germany) (Hungary)
 Ridolini nella Segheria, Ridolini Taglialeгна(?) (Italy) (Spain)
 De Houtzagerij (Netherlands)
 Larry Semon and the Sawmill (LS) (USA)
 re: Dec 12, 1921 or Jan 1, 1922
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (The dumb bell), Babe Hardy (The foreman), Frank Alexander (Owner), Kathleen O'Connor (Boss's daughter), Ann Hastings (Owner's daughter), Al Thompson (Boss), Rose Gore, Bill Hauber, Peter Ormonds, Pal the dog¹⁶¹



1922

The Show

Zigoto Garçon de Théâtre(?), Zigoto dans les Coulisses (France)
Larry der Kulissenschieber (K) (European version) (Germany)
Ridolini al Varietà (Italy)
 Larry Semon and the Show (LS) (USA)
 re: Feb 11, 1922 or March 19, 1922
 dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
 prod: Vitagraph
 cast: Larry Semon (Property man and gentle onlooker), Babe Hardy (Stage manager and audience member) Frank Alexander (Ballet dancer and wife of man with family), Lucille Carlisle (Leading lady), Betty Young (Dancer), Alice Davenport (Audience member), Al Thompson (Man who smuggles family in), Pete Gordon (His Son), Frank Coleman (Audience member and Woman with hat and Cop), Jack Miller (Villain), Grover Ligon (Bald cop), Bill Hauber (Two different audience members), Coy Watson Jr., 40 chorus girls¹⁶¹

A Pair of Kings

Su Majestad Jaimito el único (Catalonia)
Larry králem (Czechoslovakia)
 Zigoto Roi (France)
Larry der Doppelgänger (K), Larry Semon als König (V) (Germany)
Ridolini Imperatore, Ridolini Granduca (Italy)
 Camaradas al Bordo (Spain)
 Larry Semon Great Duke (LS) (USA)

re: May 15, 1922 or June 11, 1922
dir: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
auth: Larry Semon, Norman Taurog
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Stranger and King August I.), Lucille (Princess Lucille), Oliver Hardy (General Alarm)

Golf

Jaimito jugador de golf, Jaimito vencedor (Catalonia)
Larry hráčem golfu (Czechoslovakia)
Larrys Golfspielereien (K), Larry Semon als Golfspieler(V),
Eine Würzige Gulaschsuppe (MoN) (Germany)
Ridolini Giuocatore di Golf (Italy)
El vencedor (Spain)
re: Aug 8, 1922 or Sept 3, 1922
dir: Larry Semon, Tom Buckingham
auth: Larry Semon, Tom Buckingham
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (The son), Lucille Carlisle (His sister and the blonde flapper), Al Thompson (The father), Oliver Hardy (The Neighbor), Vernon Dent (The suitor), The golfers: Bill Hauber, Fred Lancaster, Pete Gordon, Joe Basil; further: Vincent Dermott, Fred Gambold, Eva Thatcher

The Counter Jumper

Larry hokynářem (Czechoslovakia)
Larry im Gemischtwarenladen (K), Der Oberkonfusionsrat (V) (Germany)
Ridolini Commesso al Bazar Alimentare(?) (Italy)
re: Dec 6, 1922
dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (The counter jumper), Lucille Carlisle (Glorietta Hope), Oliver Hardy (Gaston), Spencer Bell (A clerk), Al Thompson, Bill Hauber, Joe Basil, Eva Thatcher, Jack Duffy, William McCall, Reginald Lyons, James Donnelly, and a walking egg

The Agent

work titles: *The Sleuth*, *The Gringo*
Jaimito en Alcohol (Catalonia)
Larry v Mexiku (Czechoslovakia)
Zigoto Agent Secrète, Zigoto Gabelou (France)
Ridolini Agente Secreto (Italy)
Tomasín Contra el Alcohol (Spain)
re: Sept 27, 1922 or Nov 19, 1922
dir: Larry Semon, Tom Buckingham
auth: Larry Semon, Tom Buckingham
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Federal agent), Lucille Carlisle, Oliver Hardy (Don Fusiloi), Bill Hauber, Joe Basil, Al Thompson, Kittie Rinehart, Robert McKenzie, Harry De Roy, Ed Wertz, Donald Maines⁽¹⁴⁾

Larry had been advised not to use *The Sleuth* as release title, since it had been overused: see correspondence with Ligon Johnson, attorney at law, September 26, 1922; see also [16])

1923

No Wedding Bells

Jaimito entre Chinos (Catalonia)
Zigoto chez les Mandarins (France)
Ridolini fra i Cinesi (Italy)
re: Feb 1923(?)

dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Lucille Carlisle (The girl), Oliver Hardy (The father), Spencer Bell (The butler), Glen Cavender (Irate husband)⁽¹⁴⁾

The Barnyard

Die Verbitterte Oma im Stroh (MoN) (Germany)
copy without title known to be extant (Italy)
re: Mar 26, 1923
dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Farm hand), Oliver Hardy (Larry's co-worker), Frank Hayes (The Farmer's wife), Kathleen Myers (The farmer's daughter), Spencer Bell, Bill Hauber, Al Thompson, Joe Basil

The Midnight Cabaret

Ein Ungemütlicher Nachtclub (MoN) (Germany)
re: late May 1923(?)
dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Waiter), Kathleen Myers (Cabaret performer), Oliver Hardy (Impetuous suitor), Bill Hauber, Al Thompson, Fred De Silva, Beauties Squad

The Gown Shop

Jaimito todo un Hombre (Catalonia)
Larry v módním salónu (Czechoslovakia)
Zigoto Couturier, Zigoto chez le Couturier, Larry au Salon (France)
Larry im Modeatelier (K), Larry als Mannequin (V) (Germany)
Ridolini e le Modelle (Italy)
Tomasín e un Hombre, Tomasín, Todo un Hombre (Spain)
Larry Semon and the Models (LS) (USA)
re: Aug 14, 1923
dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Salesman), Kathleen Myers (Head saleslady), Oliver Hardy (The boss), IMDb: Pete Gordon, Fred De Silva, James Donnelly (Husband), Harry de Roy, Dorothy Wolbert, Otto Lederer (Audience members), Frank Hayes (wife in audience), Spencer Bell (Janitor)

Lightning Love

Jaimito no le Parte en Rayo (Catalonia)
Blitz und Liebe (V) (Germany)
Ridolini e il Colpo di Fulmine(?), Ridolini al Tabarin (Italy)
re: Oct 23, 1923
dir: Larry Semon, Jimmy Davis
auth: Larry Semon, Jimmy Davis
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (A suitor), Oliver Hardy (The other suitor), Kathleen Myers (Rhea), Spencer Bell (Butler), Bill Hauber, Pete Gordon, Al Thompson, Elma the monkey

Horseshoes

Larry der Alleskönner (K), Larry als Schwergewicht (V) (Germany)
Ridolini Boxeur, Ridolini Pugilista (Italy)
Larry Semon Boxer (LS) (USA)
re: Dec 10, 1923

dir: Larry Semon, Jimmy Davis
auth: Larry Semon, Jimmy Davis
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Kathleen Myers(?) (The grocer's daughter), Oliver Hardy (Dynamite Duffy), James Donnelly, Spencer Bell, Jack Duffy?

1924

Trouble Brewing

Der Sheriff im Unterrock (MoN, together with Dew Drop Inn),
Larry als Flaschentöter (V)(Germany)
re: Mar 12, 1924
dir: James Davis, Larry Semon
auth: James Davis, Larry Semon
prod: Vitagraph
cast: Larry Semon (Dry agent), Carmelita Geraghty (The girl), Babe Hardy (Bootlegger), Bill Hauber, Al Thompson, Pete Gordon¹¹⁴

The Girl in the Limousine

Une Biche et Quarante Chevaux (France)
Achtung! Die Dame im Auto (V) (Germany)
Facciamo l'Amore (Italy)
Zigoto Heeft Pech (Netherlands)
re: July 25, 1924
dir: Larry Semon
adapted from A. H. Woods, written by Avery Hopwood and Wilson Collison (according to Moving Picture World Aug 30, 1924 scenario is by Graham Baker)
prod: Chadwick Pictures Corporation/dist. by First National
cast: Larry Semon (Tony Hamilton), Claire Adams (Betty Fraser, the girl), Charlie Murray (Ripps, the butler), Lucille Ward (Aunt Cicily), Larry Steers (Dr. Jimmy), Oliver Hardy (Freddie Neville)
6 reels

Her Boy Friend

work title: *The Four Wheel Terror*
Ces Messieurs de la Secrète, Zigoto Détective(?) (France)
Larry der Millionenerbe (K, together with Dunces and Dangers),
Larry als Detektiv (V), Kriminalisten in Kisten (MoN), Ein Verehrer (Germany)
Ridolini Detective(?) (Italy)
re: Sept 23, 1924
dir: Noel Mason Smith
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational
cast: Larry Semon (Larry, the chief's son), Dorothy Dwan (Iva Method, the girl detective), Frank Alexander (Slim Chance), Oliver N. Hardy (Killer Kid), Headquarter Hank (Fred Spence), Alma Bennett (the vamp), Spencer Bell (dock worker), Bill Hauber??

Kid Speed

Zigotto et son Bolide, Zigotto Roi de la Vitesse (France)
Mit dem Kopf in der Abfallgrube (MoN), Larry schlägt alle Rekorde! (V), Im Schneckentempo (S) (Germany)
De Autocoureur (Netherlands)
re: Nov 16, 1924
dir: Larry Semon, Noel Mason Smith
auth: Larry Semon, Noel Mason Smith
prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational
cast: Larry Semon (The Speed Kid), Dorothy Dwan (Lou), Oliver Hardy (Dangerous Dan), Frank Alexander (Avery DuPoise),

James J. Jeffries (The blacksmith), Grover Ligon, Bill Hauber, Spencer Bell

1925

The Dome Doctor

Les Travailleurs du Chapeau (France)
Larry der Haarkünstler (K), Larry der Buntspecht (V),
Der Glatzenschneider (S) (Germany)
Ridolini Cade alle Nuvole, Ridolini e il Parrucchiere(?) (Italy)
re: Apr 19, 1925
camera: Hans F. Koenekamp
titles: Charlie Saxton
editor: Sam Zimbalist
dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon(?)
prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational
cast: Larry Semon (Peter Pep), Frank DeSilva (Pierre Pep), Frank Alexander (Fuller Hulkinbulk), Dorothy (Dorothy Dwan), Earle Montgomery, Grover Ligon

Go Straight (source: Harrison's Reports May 9, 1925)

re: Apr 27, 1925
dir: Frank O'Connor
auth: Agnes Leahy, Ewart Adamson
prod: B. P. Schulberg
cast: Owen Moore (John Rhodes), Mary Carr (Mrs. Rhodes), George Fawcett (Madison), Ethel Wales (Mamie), Gladys Hulette (Gilda Hart), Lillian Leighton (Gilda's aunt), Robert Edeson (The Hawk), DeWitt Jennings (The Hunter), Francis McDonald (The Dove) as themselves: Larry Semon, Anita Stewart, Donald Keith
7-9 reels

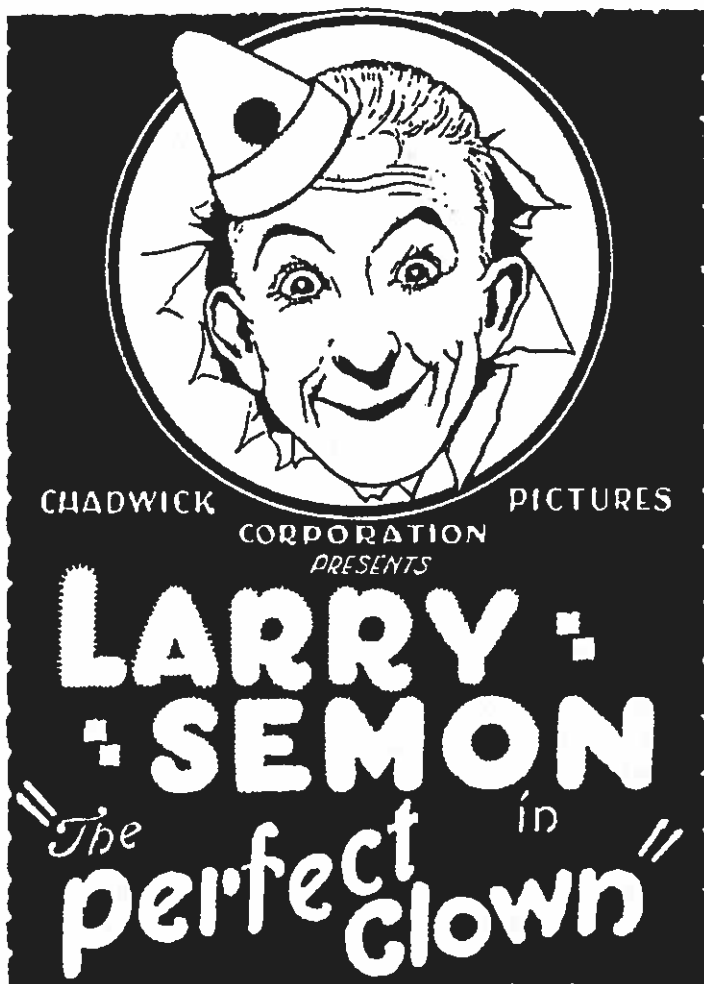
The Wizard of Oz

Páté kolo u vozu (Czechoslovakia)
Le Prince qu'on Sort (France)
Auf nach Illustrien! (V) (Germany)
Zigoto, az oroszlánszivü (Hungary)
Il Mago di Oz (Italy)
Tomasín en el Reino de Oz (Spain)
re: Jun 30, 1925
dir: Larry Semon
adaptation: Frank L. Baum, Jr., Leon Lee, Larry Semon
camera: Hans F. Koenekamp, Frank Good, Leonard Smith
prod: Chadwick
cast: Larry Semon (Toymaker and Larry and Scarecrow), Dorothy Dwan (Dorothy), Bryant Washburn (Prince Kynd), Virginia Pearson (Countess Vishus), Oliver Hardy (The tin woodman), Charlie Murray (The wizard), Josef Swickard (The prime minister), Mary Carr (Dorothy's mother), G. Howe Black/Spencer Bell (Rastus), additions taken from my German title cards: Bill Hauber, William Dinns, Frank Alexander (Dorothy's guardian), Otto Lederer (sly diplomat), Frederick KoVert
7 reels

The Cloudhopper

Un Invité à la Hauteur (France)
Larry der Unfallfahrer (Germany)
Zigoto Wilde Jaren, De Automobilist (Netherlands)
The Weak-End Driver (Castle Films), Keep Jumping (USA)
re: June 7, 1925
dir: Larry Semon
auth: Larry Semon
prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational

cast: Larry Semon (Borden(?) and Getz A. Bunn), Dorothy Dwan (Dorothy), Mickey McBan (Little will Jack, Dorothy's brother), Frank Alexander (Holden Jack, Dorothy's father), Earle Montgomery ("Red" Shirt), Otto Lederer ("Alaska Count")



The Perfect Clown

Bille de Clown, Perds Pas Tes Dollars! (France)
 Zigoto, a becsületes tolvaj (Hungary)
 Ridolini e i milioni della Banca Nazionale(?), Come Sposai Rosy (Italy)
 re: Dec 15, 1925(?)
 dir: Fred Newmeyer
 auth: Thomas J. Crizer, Larry Semon
 prod: Chadwick
 cast: Larry Semon (Bert Larry), Kate Price (Mrs. Sally Mulligan), Oliver Hardy (John Mulligan), Dorothy Dwan (The girl), Joan Meredith (Her chum), Otis Harlan (The boss), G. Howe Black/Spencer Bell (The porter)
 6 reels

1926

Stop, Look and Listen

Sept Heures de Malheur (France)
 Il Terzo Gode (Italy)
 re: Feb 1, 1926
 dir: Larry Semon, assisted by Earl Montgomery & Oliver Hardy
 adapted from the musical comedy by Harry B. Smith and Larry Semon; the copyright file lists also Tom Crizer
 prod: Larry Semon/ distribution by Pathe

cast: Larry Semon (Luther Meek), Dorothy Dwan (Dorothy), Mary Carr (Mother), William Gillespie (Bill), Lionel Belmore (The Sheriff), B.F. Blinn (The Mayor), Bull Montana (The strong man), Babe Hardy (The show manager), Curtis McHenry (The porter), Josef Swickard (Old actor)
 camera: Hans F. Koenekamp, A.S.C., Jimmy Brown
 6 reels

1927

Pass the Dumplings ¹¹⁵¹

re: Jan 16, 1927
 dir: Larry Semon
 auth: Randall Faye, Harry McCoy, Jefferson Moffitt, Gil Pratt, (?) Walters, Phil Whitman, Clarence Hennecke, Hasso Price (script)
 prod: Mack Sennett, Inc./distribution by Pathe
 cast: Alice Day, Louise Carver, Danny O'Shea, Marjorie Zier, Eddie Quillan, Thelma Hill, Alice Belcher, Barney Hellum, Andy Clyde, Jack(?) Murphy

The Plumber's Daughter ¹¹⁵¹

re: Feb 12, 1927
 dir: Larry Semon
 auth: Phil Whitman, Harry McCoy and others
 prod: Mack Sennett, Inc./distribution by Pathe
 cast: Alice Day, Don Maines, Eddie Quillan, Danny O'Shea, Alma Bennett, Evelyn Sherman, Billy Gilbert, Irving Bacon, Leo Sulky, George Gray, Dave Morris

A Dozen Socks ¹¹⁵¹

re: March 13, 1927
 dir: Earl Rodney, Larry Semon (script)
 auth: Carl Harbaugh, Phil Whitman and others
 prod: Mack Sennett, Inc./distribution by Pathe
 cast: Alice Day, Jack Dempsey, Danny O'Shea, Marjorie Zeir, Barney Hellum, George Gray, Bobby Dunn

Spuds

Larry hrdivou (Czechoslovakia)
 Zigoto aux Manoeuvres (France)
 Zigoto a tüzben (Hungary)
 Ridolini alle Grandi Manovre (Italy)
 Bei den Manövern (Suisse)
 re: Feb 4, 1927
 dir: Larry Semon
 auth: Larry Semon
 prod: Larry Semon/distribution by Pathe
 cast: Larry Semon (Spuds), Kewpie Morgan (Sergeant), Robert J. Graves (General), Hazel Howell (Bertha), Hugh Fay (Spy), Dorothy Dwan (Madelon, the waitress), IMDb: Edward Hearn (Captain Arthur)
 camera: Hans F. Koenekamp, Jas. Brown Jr.,
 6 reels

The Stunt Man

Une Solide Doublure (France)
 Larry der Supermann (K), Larry der Filmstarersatz (V) (Germany)
 re: Oct 23, 1927 or Oct 27, 1927
 dir: Larry Semon
 auth: Larry Semon(?)
 prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational
 cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Jack Lipson (His rival), Dorothy Raynor (The girl), Charles Meakin (Her father)

Underworld

Les Nuits de Chicago (France)

Unterwelt (BR, V) (Germany)

Vasember (=Iron Man) (Hungary)

Le Notti di Chicago (Italy)

Unterwelt (Suisse)

La Ley del Hampa (Spain)

To Pay the Penalty (UK) ?

re: Oct 29, 1927

dir: Josef von Sternberg

based on a story by Ben Hecht

prod: Paramount

cast: George Bancroft (Bull Weed), Clive Brook (Rolls Royce),
Evelyn Brent (Feathers), Larry Semon (Slippy Lewis), Fred
Kohler (Buck Mulligan), Helen Lynch (His girl), Jerry Mandy
(Paloma), Karl Morse

Oh, What a Man

Zigotto der Weiberheld(?) (Austria)

L'As des Detectives (France)

Larry der Weiberheld (Germany)

La Brigantessa (Italy)

re: Nov 28, 1927 or Dec 4, 1927

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon

Camera: Hans F. Koenekamp

prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational

cast: Larry Semon (The detective), Gertrude Astor (The bandit),
Jack Richardson (Her pal), Silas Wilcox (older man), Willie
Dennis, Paul Dennis

1928

Dummies

Larry kouzelníkem (Czechoslovakia)

Zigotto Charlatan, Un fameux Charlatan (France)

Larry als Kurpfuscher (V)(?) (Germany)

Ridolini Charlatane (Italy)

re: Jan 1, 1928 or Jan 11, 1928

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon

prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational

cast: Larry Semon (The entertainer), Jim Donnelly (The
Professor), Marie Astaire (His daughter)

A Simple Sap

(Catalonia)

Larry prodává krám (Czechoslovakia)

Un Cœur dans la Melasse (France)

Ridolini Com messo al Bazar Alimentare(?) (Italy)

re: Feb 12, 1928

dir: Larry Semon

auth: Larry Semon(?)

prod: Chadwick/distribution by Educational

cast: Larry Semon (Larry), Bee Amann (His girl), Walter Hiers
(His rival), Jimmie Aubrey (The Storekeeper), Billy Gilbert
(Grandpa), Ed Davis (The nut)

Special Delivery

re: Feb 20, 1928

dir: H. Goodrich, Larry Semon

camera: Harry Hallenberger

titles: George Marion, Jr.

auth: John Gooderich

prod: Famous-Lasky

cast: Eddie (Postman, Eddie Beagle), Jobyna Ralston (Madge
Warren), William Powell (Harold Jones), Jack Dougherty
(Flannigan, a cop), Donald Keith (Harrigan, the fireman), Victor
Potel (Nip, a detective), Paul Kelly (Tuck, another detective),
Mary Carr (the mother)

As the Vitagraph copyright and release synopses have it, Larry Semon did not release films between late April and August 1917 which is contrary to his usual output of one film per week. Davide Turconi makes the same observation, but tentatively lists the following titles, all Vitagraph one-reelers, which he took from *Motography: Rogues and Recklessness* (release Apr 23, 1917), *Jeers and Jailbirds* (re: Apr 13, 1917), *Chinks and Chases* (re: May 7, 1917), *Heavy Hugs and Hula Hula* (re: May 14, 1917), and *Gall and Gasoline* (re: May 21, 1917). Turconi presumes that they may belong to Larry Semon's filmography¹⁷. However, the release date of *Rogues and Recklessness* overlaps with that of *Hazards and Home Runs*. It would have been unusual and uneconomic for one artist to release two films on one and the same day so that {*Rogues and Recklessness*} can probably be ruled out as part of Semon's complete works.

Another interesting addition that deserves discussion is that Semon mentioned in an interview with Cinémagazine [21] that the first film he ever made was called *The Violinist*. Whether this is true could not be confirmed as no other information has yet been available.

Several sources suggest (e.g. ^[17], ^[18], ^[20]) that Semon had been (co-) authoring and (co-)directing some of the Frank Daniels' comedies from the "Captain Jinks" series. Among these one-reelers are: *Captain Jinks' Evolution*, *Captain Jinks' Hidden Treasure*, *Captain Jinks Should Worry*, *Captain Jinks' Widow*, *Captain Jinks' Dilemma* and *Captain Jinks' Nephew's Wife* of which the first four titles appear in the copyright files of 1916-1917, but suggest other writers and directors than Larry Semon. It is, of course, very possible that Semon was assigned to do gags/story lines for these films while an employee of Vitagraph.

Two more films of which Semon's collaboration could not be confirmed are: *The Perils of Petersburg* (see ^[18]), which is another Alice Day comedy made in 1926 and *My Best Girl* (1925) that features Dorothy Dwan. For the latter, no entry in the copyright files could be found. The titles were spotted on the internet in the IMDB entry for Larry Semon¹⁹.

Unassignable Titles underscored titles are known to be extant

Tomasín, en los Bosques

La Cárcel en el Fondo del Mar

Zigoto Détective

Zigoto Homme de Ménage

Zigoto Prétendant

Zigoto Fiancé

Zigoto Commis

Ridolini Sposa la Sua Vergine 18 Carati

Ridolini Ha il Sorriso

Ridolini Commediante

Ridolini Detective

Ridolini coi Banditi

Ridolini Campagnolo

Ridolini Chauffeur

Ridolini Giuocatore di Poker

Ridolini Astemio

I miei 16 Milioni

Gli Amori di Ridolini

Il Guai di Ridolini

Ridolini Cade dalle Nuvole

Ridolini Difensore del Regime Secco

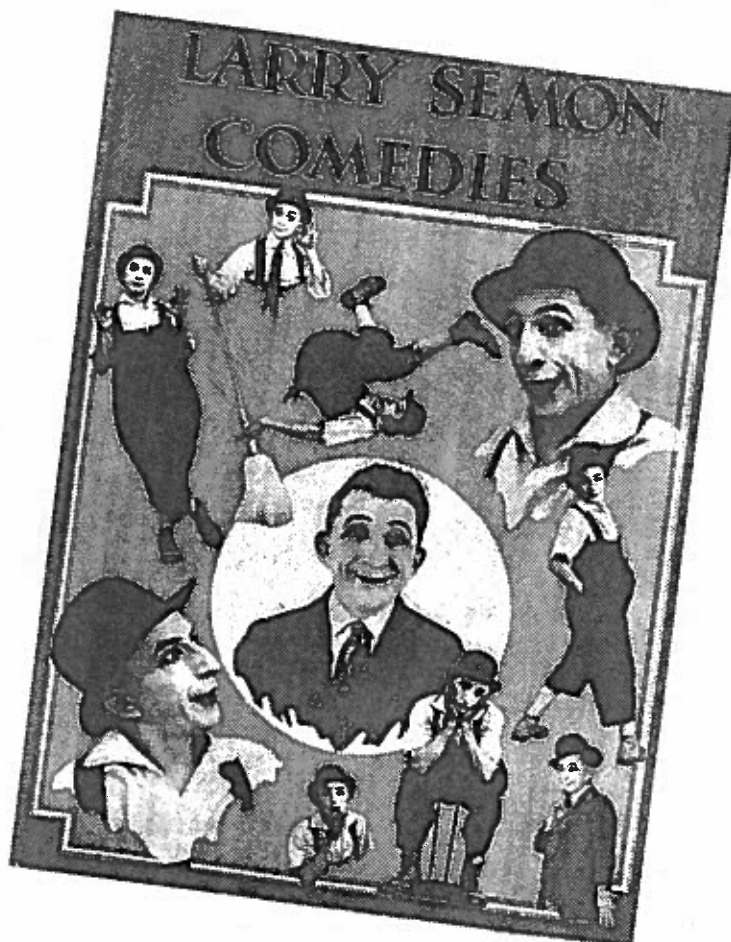
Ridolini fra i Selvaggi
Ridolini Giuocatore di Scacch
Pfusch, Sprit und Company

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- [14] Manuel Rotellar. Tres Còmicos del Cine Mudo: Harold Lloyd, Larry Semon, Harry Langdon. Cinema 2000, pg46-49, 1981(?).
- [15] Warren M. Sherck, editor. The Films of Mack Sennett: Credit Documentation from the Mack Sennett Collection at the Margaret Herrick Library. Landham, MD and London: Scarecrow Press, 1998.
- [16] Rob Stone. Laurel Or Hardy. The Solo Films of Stan Laurel and Oliver "Babe" Hardy. Split Reel Books. Temecula, California. 1996.
- [17] Davide Turconi. Il Cinema Ritrovato: Filmografia di Larry Semon. In Cinegrafie,(2); pg35-70. Editrice Compositori Bologna, 1989. II Semestre.
- [18] Special Collections-URL UCLA. Release files. Smith Collection at the University of California, Los Angeles, U.S.A.
- [19] The Internet Movie DataBase. Larry Semon. <http://us.imdb.com/>
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- [21] Unknown. Larry Semon. Cinemagazine, 15, April 14, 1922

Acknowledgements

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Magic Mysteries & Cunning Cut-Outs "Larry in Paperland"

By Claudia Sassen

When Zera Semon died in Philadelphia on April 9th, 1901 at the premature age of 54, he had spent a life dedicated to the stage, travelling Canada, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and the United States with his troupe of artists. He was an all-round prodigy, well-known for his gift shows that included ventriloquism, pantomime and highly-skilled magic acts in which he was aptly aided by his wife and his son Lawrence "Larry" Semon. Magic had been some tradition of the family since Larry's grandfather, Emanuel Semon, became involved with the tours of Herrmann the Great¹ and studied his magic routines.

Zera's show was a success, but he remained poor and things turned out even worse when he had to close down during a disastrous trip to California at the end of the 19th century. This shattering experience obviously prompted Zera upon his death-bed to ask Larry to abandon the stage, study cartooning and embark on a career in the newspaper business so that he had a reliable job to earn his living.

Zera had a knack for drawing cartoons and taught Larry, who had inherited his talent, his first steps which the young boy gladly took up². In a 1923 interview Larry recalls that he used the pages of his Latin grammar book to draw an "animated" cartoon in the upper corners. By flipping the pages one could see a round of boxing¹¹⁴.

Larry complied with his father's last wish. After attending High School in Savannah, Georgia, Larry went to art school in New York¹¹⁴ and later began work on the staff of Philadelphia's *North American* newspaper before he went on to *The New York Telegram*, *The Morning Telegraph*, *The New York Herald* and finally to *The New York Evening Sun*¹¹⁵. Larry apparently did not have to face great obstacles entering the newspaper business and his father was only too aware of this: Jacob Semon, Larry's uncle, was a popular figure in the city. His tobacco shop that opened in the Merchants' Hotel, opposite the State House and later moved to Chestnut Street, where a popular theatre was located, was a rendezvous

for many prominent men. Soon after his first wife Anna had died, Jacob married the daughter of Thomas Jackson, a well-known newspaper man¹¹⁶.

Taking articles into account that were released soon after rumor spread that Larry had signed his 3.6 million dollar contract with Vitagraph, Larry in

fact needed to pull strings to find a job: the *Toledo Blade* titled "Larry Semon proved poor cartoonist but gets laughs as screen comedian"¹¹⁷, while his former colleagues of the *New York Telegram*, which on the occasion spontaneously formed the "I Knew Him When - Club," were even harder in their judgement: they remembered him as a "conscientious objector to work...supposed to be as funny in his attempts at cartooning as a cry for help."

A short time back he was known for his "hang-dog expression and a constant fear of drawing the little blue envelope instead of his thirty-five per [week]."

One member of the staff put it even so far as to mention that "as a cartoonist he was a good jockey, for one city editor told him as man to man that he would be better off if he got out of that line of work. Apparently he needed the advice"^{117,118}.

With these evaluations in mind it seems odd to learn from other sources that Larry at the early age of 18 already had a high reputation in New York cartoonist circles and that President Taft sent for Larry from the White House to draw his caricature¹¹⁹. It would be difficult to judge his ability had not some of his earliest professional art work been found in a

volume of the *North American*³ that ranked among the most respected papers of old Philadelphia. Initially, Larry had been working as a general handy man in the art department of the paper.

As far as it could be traced back, Larry had begun to contribute cut-out paper toys as early as Spring 1909 to the children's section of the Sunday Comics taking the place of Ted's colour halves. After some alternating turns with M.A. Hayes, Semon's cut-outs became a regular gimmick. Larry's artwork along with the other half page comic features of his colleagues survive in beautiful and luminous colors. Printed on acid paper, however, the pages are unfortunately prone to fall to pieces and had to be preserved requiring much archival restoration work for this issue of "Slapstick!".

3: Thank you, Steve!



Larry c.1915. Already a director and still in newspaper business.

1: It remains a mystery whether he had to do with Compar or his younger brother Alexander Herrmann (see [10].)

2: Thank you Joan Berschler, Kevin Brownlow, Jean-Jacques Couderc, Bob Dickson, George Katchmer, Glenn Mitchell, David Price, William H. McIlhenny, Chester Prudhomme, Steve Rydzewski and Chris Seguin for the wonderful material



A rare shot of Larry's days in the paper biz. When this shot was taken he ranked as a famous sport writer. Larry second from right. Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.

Larry's cut-outs include all kinds of immobile and moving characters which cover figures to put up, jumping jacks or technically more elaborate jiggers with rotating heads and pendulum eyes. They depict nursery figures such as "Simple Simon," the comic heroes of his staff such as Hayes' and Wiedersheim's "Kaptin Kiddo," the awkward heroine of the Grif series "It's Only Ethelinda," or typical scenes of foreign cultures designed to teach the children. The latter demanded from him a slight detachment from his cartoons towards a more elegant and serious style; a transition that he easily mastered.

Sometimes it seems he even turned members of his staff into cartoons: at least this is what the cut-out of the "Jolly Jangling Johnson Jigger" indicates, since Larry attached to it an apology to fellow worker Bradford, who usually occupied the color half slot above Larry's for his "Enoch Pickel-weight" comic strip. The cut-outs suggest that Larry's drawing talent was extraordinary and even more so considering that he was in his early twenties. His work was of equal quality to some of the other contributors and far ahead of most of them. He succeeded very well in drawing faces as well as all parts of the body. In particular he had the gift to draw hands of

4: Incidentally, when Larry later became a famous comedian, *Pictures & Picturegoer* magazine would nickname him "Simple Simon" (13)

5: The quality of a drawing can quickly be checked by holding it against the light and looking at its reverse side.)

which many artists claim the hardest to render. Whatever Larry contributed to the *North American* is of a well-balanced composition giving his drawing a mature impression.*

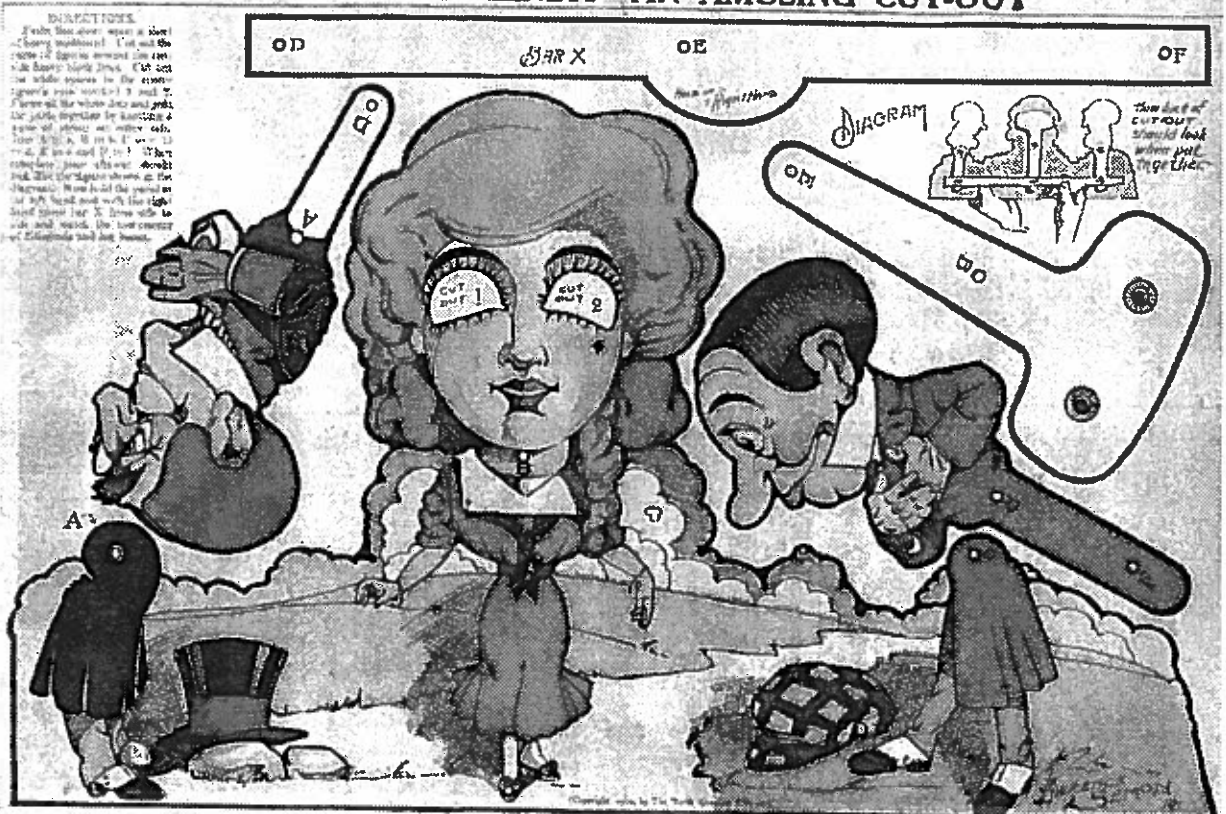
Undoubtedly, Zera would have been proud of him. Speaking of maturity, Larry had the strange habit of frequently changing his signature with every new item he submitted. So while his artistic style showed consistency in itself, there obviously were other fields where he was still in an experimental phase.

Of Larry's art work which is available for this publication, though no example of his *New York Telegram* era was at hand, it seems that Larry created his best work while he was with the *North American*. Instances of his later work illustrate that he seldom took the time or had the time to elaborate the details of his cartoons so that they remained as weak illustrations. An exception maybe the posters he designed for the promotion of his own films. These items are a delight considering the fact that many poster artists failed to capture the essence of Larry's facial expressions though they did a good job depicting the vivacity of his comic movements. As even later cartoons of Larry show, he remained one of the best to do his own portrait. The most unfortunate cartoon by Larry that could be found was a comic strip called "Marcus, the Boarding House Goat," which he did around 1913 for the *Post-Dispatch*. In an advertising campaign for Tuxedo Tobacco he drew very similar characters.

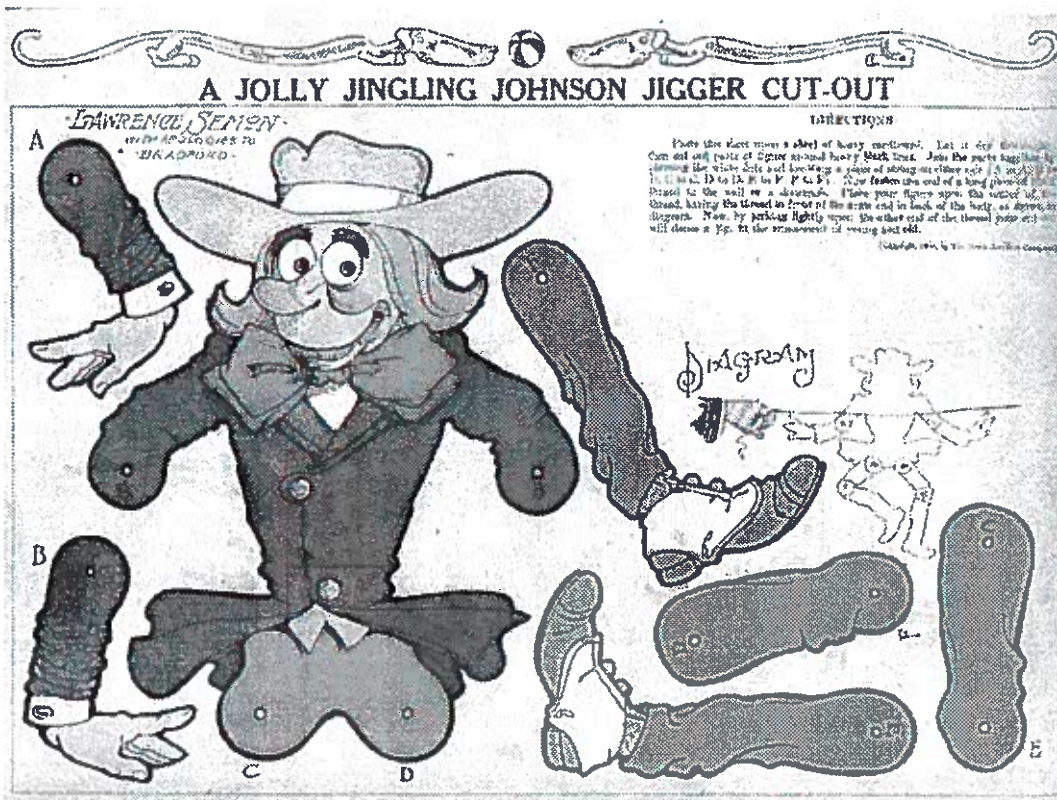
Not that his technical skills would be deplorable, but what makes the Marcus series disappointing is that he did not create his own characters. Instead he would obtain a Rube Goldberg-ish style that was en vogue then. But without doubt this is another proof of how well he knew to adjust to different styles and maybe he was even asked to imitate the work of one of his most popular cartooning contemporaries. Another drawback of these instances is that they are indeed not particularly funny. But one can imagine that it is easier to technically adapt someone else's style than to fill it with life.

Larry would not keep his drawing expertise to himself. As contemporary newspaper clippings demonstrate, he trained his second wife Dorothy Dwan

CHARMING ETHELINDA—AN AMUSING CUT-OUT



Charming Ethelinda. Larry taking up the cartoon characters of his colleagues of the *North American*, here the awkward heroine of Grif's series, *It's Only Ethelinda*.



A Jolly Jingling Johnson Jigger. Not only the illiteration is remarkable (a habit he would keep titling his early films), but also the fact that he obviously turned his cartoon colleague Bradford into a jumping jack.

in the art of cartooning. Recently, an appraiser who was hired to assess a gouache painting from the twenties by a certain Lucille Carlisle⁶ assumed that Larry also nurtured her drawing talent. But this is speculation. Of what else is known for sure Larry handed down his drawing talent to Virginia, his only daughter, although he probably never trained her. Virginia was an avid amateur painter, who took lessons and indulged in her passion in the afternoons after all the housework had been done. She never went public.

Although Zera inspired Larry to make the best of his artistic talent he probably did not suggest he exploit his knowledge of magic tricks. But this is what Larry did – systematically – and we had better not guess at the horde of magicians whom he made see red. On July 18, 1909 Larry started his series "Mysteries of Magic, Past and Present, Exposed," again in the *North American* and again in its Sunday edition, but this time as a contribution to the magazine section. Usually occupying three or four columns, he weekly explained the trick of popular illusions. As to what the *North American* volumes available indicate, the series terminated at the end of March 1910 after 35 episodes. Some of them, such as levitation acts, referred to the routines which Herrmann the Great used on the stage, others were collections of smaller sleight-of-hand mysteries or, like the "Trunk Trick," they came right from the treasure trove of Zera Semon himself. Larry illustrated each chapter with a black and white ink drawing that was his own work and, in doing, so displayed yet another drawing style. And again he would be playing around with his signature.

It remains obscure why Larry decided to expose all those magic tricks. Maybe it was in order to preserve a great repertoire of magic knowledge. At least this can be inferred from what he told magazine writer Elizabeth Peltret:

"The old magicians are gone now... They were too careful of their secrets and so in most cases those secrets died with them."⁷

Given that his intentions had been so gentle, why did he reveal the tricks to the public and in doing so robbed audiences of their wonderment? Why

6: Lucille Carlisle was leading lady in most of his Vitagraph two reelers and the reason why he left his first wife Gussie)

7: Besides this, Larry's texts contain close to nothing of what could be termed biographical information. They serve their purpose in that they are factual, precise and easily comprehensible)

did he not write a book that would only be traded in magic circles? What mainly triggered him to publish the tricks had obviously been money. When it is true that he was on the staff of more than one paper he probably had the income of a freelance worker and so had to secure payment wherever possible. And since the subheader of each magic article reads:

"By Lawrence Semon – Son of the late Professor Zera Semon, one of the most noted magicians of his day."

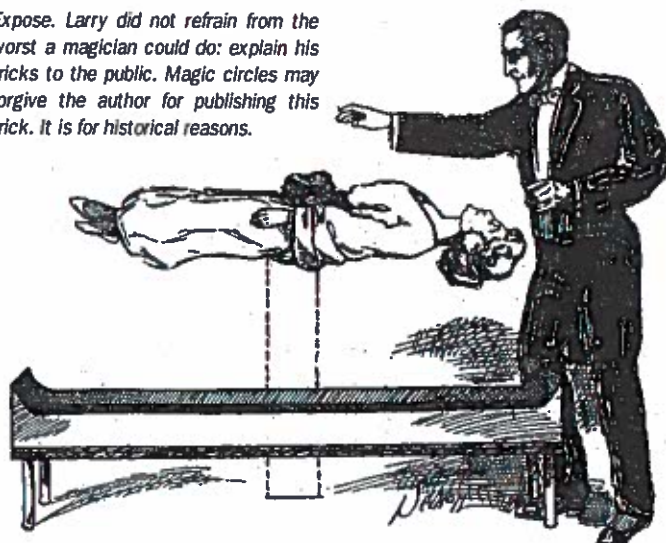
It adds the assumption that he was – understandably – anxious to make himself a name⁸. Be it as it may, everybody who has to make a living from the mystery of magic tricks must have been aghast about his behaviour and if these articles were not enough, Larry even had the fortitude to conclude his articles with the appeal "Those who want an explanation of any particular trick of any magician, past or present, may obtain it by addressing Mr. Semon, in care of the Sunday North

American, and inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. In writing, state distinctly the trick you desire to have explained. Do not ask for more than one trick in the same letter." It is possible that Larry wrote the answers to his readers' enquiries by hand or typewriter and autographed them. It would be interesting to learn whether some of these replies still exist!

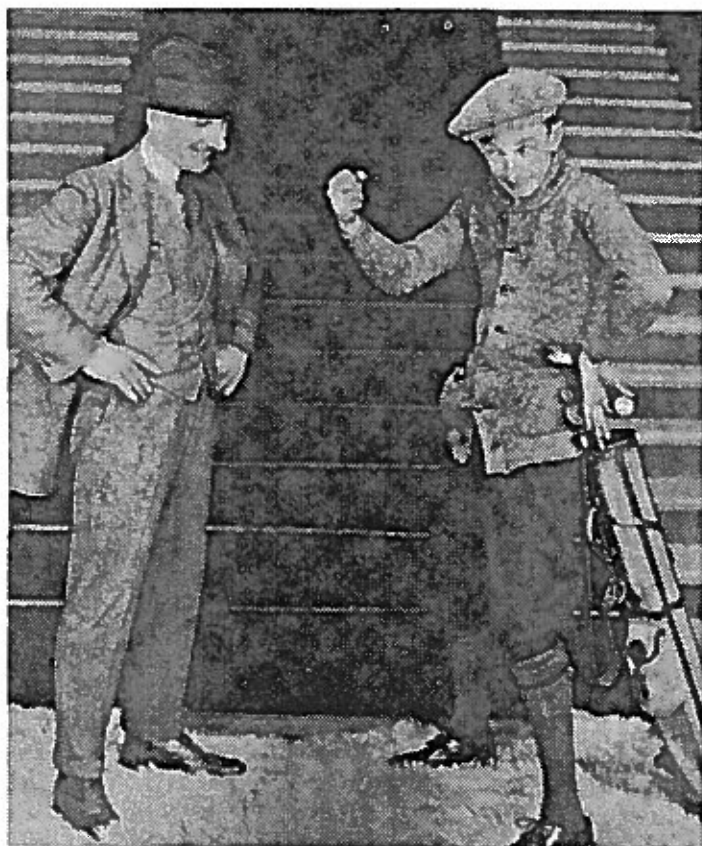
One might assume that in publishing his articles, Larry cut off his connections with the conjuring guild for good. The more it is surprising that he was a most welcome guest in the "Los Angeles Society of Magicians" (L.A.S.M.). The *"Magical Bulletin"* of 1922 reports the event and is much in praise:

"We thought by this time, all the Motion Picture Magicians had been discovered. It was Matt Martin who found the Dean of them all, Larry Semon. Larry attended the Los Angeles Society of Magicians show at the Gamut Club and was so impressed by Matt Martin's work, he invited him to the stu-

Expose. Larry did not refrain from the worst a magician could do: explain his tricks to the public. Magic circles may forgive the author for publishing this trick. It is for historical reasons.



"LEVITATION AS SEEN FROM THE FRONT"
Dotted lines represent plate glass



Forgiven not forgotten? Despite his misdeeds as a youngster he was still a welcome guest in magic circles. By courtesy of William H. McIlhenny, David Price.

dio. Matt wandered out, expecting to meet a mere inquisitive movie actor. Instead he found Larry Semon, a very clever magician. Even Larry's cameraman, George Baxter, is a magician and member of the L.A.S.M." [110]. Since Larry's misdeeds had been those of a rather unknown youngster more than 12 years earlier, most of the L.A.S.M. members either did not remember or even not know about Larry's articles. Those who remembered presumably ignored the case in favor of the fact that they were having a great star in their circle.

When Larry was on the *North American* he had probably reached the height of his achievements as a cartoonist and when he was featured in the *New York Sun* he had reached the pinnacle of his career. A new challenge proved the motion picture industry and last not least his drawing ability was a splendid foundation that helped him sketch his ideas so that he had a valuable means to go quickly into production.

A list of Larry's North American publications

The date of each newspaper is followed by the title of his articles about magic, followed by the title of his cut-outs. This list was co-researched by Steve Rydzewski.

- 07/18/09 Black Art #1; Cut-out by M.A. Hayes
- 07/25/09 The Talking Head #2; The Wrestlers
- 08/01/09 Trunk Trick #3; NO COMICS AVAILABLE
- 08/08/09 Decapitation Illusion #4; Cut-out by M.A. Hayes
- 08/15/09 Basket Trick #5; Hunters, Tiger & Gorilla Cut-out Puzzle
- 08/22/09 Levitation #6; Hippodrome Jr, Ringmaster & the Elephant
- 08/29/09 Tricks Relating to Spiritualism #7; Donkey, Monkey & Clown
- 09/05/09 Growing Roses on the Stage #8; Horse & Rider for the Junior Hippodrome
- 09/12/09 Spiritualistic Manifestations #9; NO COMICS AVAILABLE
- 09/19/09 Japanese Tricks #10; The Jolly Professor
- 09/26/09 What Can Be Done With Playing Cards #11; Monkey on a Stick
- 10/03/09 Spiritual Cabinets #12; The Jolly Tar

- 10/10/09 "She" (Cremation Illusion) #13; Willie Westinghouse's Airship
- 10/17/09 Changing Liquids #14; Sambo & His Mule
- 10/24/09 The Dice Box #15; Lively Jester
- 10/31/09 Magical Cooking #16; Marionette Brigand
- 11/07/09 The Box and the Platform #17; Dancing in the Barn
- 11/14/09 Making Coffee On the Stage #18; NO COMICS AVAILABLE
- 11/21/09 The Hat of Plenty #19; The Artist's Dilemma
- 11/28/09 The Inexhaustible Coconut Shell #20; The Seesaw
- 12/05/09 The Double Box Mystery #21; Sambo & the Giraffe
- 12/12/09 More About Cards #22; Christmas Hold-Up Kaptin Kiddo
- 12/19/09 NO ARTICLE FOUND; Santa Claus Cut-Out for Christmas
- 12/26/09 Flight of the Favorite #23; Uncle Sam's New Year Greeting
- 01/02/10 A Spiritual Cabinet Built Upon the Stage #24; The Lion Tamer
- 01/09/10 Where Is She? #25; The Jolly Blacksmiths
- 01/16/10 The Vanishing Assistant #26; Simple Simon And The Pleman
- 01/23/10 A Wonderful Levitation Illusion #27; Eskimo Family, Cut-Out That Smacks Of The Frozen North
- 01/30/10 The Paper Bag and Box Mystery #28; A Jolly Jangling Johnson Jigger Cut-Out (With apologies to Bradford)
- 02/06/10 Several Small Tricks #29; Wriggling Willie
- 02/13/10 A Mysterious Prisoner #30; A Cut-Out Valentine
- 02/20/10 A New Cremation Illusion #31; A Cut-Out Family of Arabs



The North American Building as it looked when Larry started his newspaper career. By courtesy of Steve Rydzewski



(Left) After Semon had made himself a name on The North American staff in Philadelphia, he moved over to New York where he was mainly employed in the political and sports sections of some of the Big Apple's largest newspapers. Photo shows New York's "Newspaper Row," including the Sun and Times buildings.

- 02/27/10 The Triple Box Mystery #32; The Wizard's Album
 03/06/10 A Chapter on Handcuffs #33; A Japanese Family, A Pretty and Interesting Cut-Out
 03/13/10 The Milkcan Mystery #34; Kaptin Kiddo's Hobby Horse
 03/20/10 Escape from the Packing Box #35; Dubbalong, Scow and Johnson in a Backyard Serenade
 03/27/10 NO MAGIC ARTICLE FOUND; Charming Ethelinda

Sources:

- [1] Jacob S. Semon veteran tobacco merchant dies from heart disease. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1923.
- [2] Larry Semon Film Comedian Dies on Coast. *New York Herald Tribune*, October 9, 1928. p.25.
- [3] Larry Semon Mourned. As "Clown of Tragedy." Life Drama Closed. *Los Angeles Herald*, October 9, 1928.
- [4] Maude Cheatham. The Cinema Caricaturist. *Classic*, April 1922.
- [5] Harrison Haskins. Semon the Jester. *Motion Picture Classic*, December 1920.
- [6] George Katchmer. Remembering the Great Silents Part I. *Classic Images*, (165), March 1989.
- [7] Annabel Lee. Larry Semon proved poor cartoonist but gets laughs as screen comedian. *Toledo Blade*, May 10, 1920.
- [8] H. McFadden. A New Magician Discovered in Filmdom. *The Magical Bulletin*, 9(12), May 1922.
- [9] Elizabeth Peltret. On Location with Larry Semon. *Motion Picture Magazine*, November 1920.
- [10] David Price. Magic: A Pictorial History of Conjurers of the Theater. Cranbury: Rosemont, 1985.
- [11] Richard M. Roberts. Larry Semon - the Cartoonist as Comic. Part I. *Classic Images*, (286), April 1999.
- [12] Unknown ...make good is getting now 3,6 million dollars (only fragmentary title available). *New York Telegram*, May 28, 1919.
- [13] Unknown. Simple Semon. *Pictures and Picturegoer*, pages 24-25, May 1925.
- [14] Ruth Wing, editor. *The Blue Book Of The Screen*. chapter Larry Semon. Hollywood, California, 1923.

(Right) Some Toulouse Lautrec style but still Semonesque. Larry's poster in order to promote the release of his one-reeler *Plans and Pajamas*, 1917. By courtesy of Chris Seguin, Jean-Jacques Couderc.





BEN TURPIN at MACK SENNETT



Early in 1917 Ben Turpin went through the gates at 1712 Allesandro Street, Edendale, California... Mack Sennett's Keystone Studio.

According to author Kalton C. Lahue in his fine book, Mack Sennett's Keystone. The Man. The Myth and The Comedies, when Sennett became interested in Turpin after seeing Ben's Vogue Comedies, he had his business manager, George W. Stout, locate and hire Ben. Lahue stated, "George Stout made numerous attempts to contact Ben over the next few months, but the Vogue studio rebuffed each by refusing calls for Turpin, censoring his mail deliveries and otherwise attempting to keep Ben unaware that Mack Sennett wanted to talk with him. Vogue suffered from a fear prevalent (and justifiable) among producers – whenever a screen personality found someone as important as Keystone initiating a feeler, he either broke his contract or demanded more money, and Vogue executives were determined that if they could help it, neither would happen to their relationship with Turpin."

In 1924 Ben recalled: "At the end of the year (with Vogue) I said to my business manager:

"We're going around to see Mack Sennett, you and I. I think maybe he's anxious to have a little talk with us."

Lahue continues, "But something as important as this can't be kept a secret forever, and Ben finally learned through the grapevine what was going on. (Turpin) suddenly appear(ed) in Stout's office one day minus the identifying toothbrush moustache. As Ben had not given his name, Stout failed to recognize the little comic and so treated him as just another applicant looking for work around the studio. When he reached the inevitable question, 'What can you do?', Ben offered himself as combination carpenter and janitor. Then turning away from Stout and bending over, Ben reached into a pocket, pulled out his moustache and fastened it in place. Straightening up, he whirled around to face Stout with his eyes crossed magnificently and announced, 'I'm Ben Turpin!' Elated that they had finally made contact, Stout reached into his desk drawer, pulled out a contract and shoved it in front of Ben. Turpin signed on the dotted line without even questioning the salary offer and Stout excused himself, rushing off to tell Sennett the good news."

That was in March 1917.

"I signed with Mack Sennett for \$200 a week.

"Every six months the pay envelope got heavier until finally it was a burden to haul it to the bank and I asked for checks. I stayed with Sennett until 1927, proving that it pays to stay with one concern."

Ben recalled his first day at Keystone to writer Gordon Gassaway for Picture Play magazine in 1920:

"I sat and sat and sat in Mr. Sennett's office until I noticed he began to wiggle and twitch in his chair. Then he turned to me and exploded: 'Well, what do you want?'

"I want a contract," I said.

"All right. But take those eyes out of here and stick 'em in a bucket of water or something until we're ready for you."

Sennett himself told Gene Fowler for Father Goose in 1934: "One day a scrawny, cross-eyed fellow named Ben Turpin applied for a job. Sennett was very superstitious and kept his fingers crossed all the time Turpin talked. Mack wanted to hire Ben, but feared that ill luck might follow. Finally he put him to work as a janitor. Later he allowed the angle-orbed aspirant to take a trial ride on the back step of the patrol wagon.

"None of our cops are game enough to jump from that step and land on their backsides," said Sennett. "If you do a good, high fall from that step and don't break your tail, I'll give you a job in the pictures."

"Turpin got on the patrol, leaped until the horizon could be seen below his flying rump, then landed hard. He got up, caught the patrol and took another sensational pratfall. Again he jumped and landed. And again and again. In fact, Sennett and (Fred) Mace had to restrain him from more leaps.

"It was pretty good," said Sennett, with characteristic understatement, "The job is yours."

Great story, but I don't know how true it is! Fred Mace had died of apoplexy three weeks prior to the earliest verified date of Turpin at Sennett. So maybe it *wasn't* Mace with Sennett; or maybe Turpin was at Keystone while Mace was still alive (pre February 21, 1917); or maybe Sennett's story wasn't Turpin or, even, pure fiction.

However Turpin's original six page Keystone contract survives¹ and is signed and dated March 16, 1917. According to the terms, Ben was to start work at Keystone exactly one month later on April 16, 1917 at one hundred and ninety dollars weekly for the first six months of the contract. It was agreed that Sennett "hereby engages and employs (Turpin) for a continuous period of six months beginning on the sixteenth day of April 1917, as a motion picture actor to act, play, pose, perform and take part in motion picture rehearsals, acts, parts, scenes, settings, roles and plays as ordered by the employer at the studio or studios of the Employer in California or on designated location or at any other place required by (Sennett) for the agreed weekly salary of One Hundred and Ninety Five (\$195.00) Dollars to be paid weekly by (Sennett) to (Turpin).

(Turpin) shall attend daily during established working hours (whether cast or not) for the performance of his duties.

Lahue writes, "Ben's expectations of great things to come went unfulfilled as he reported for work day after day, drawing his paycheck weekly for sitting around. Finally, he was assigned to the group of second-string comics who were making the so-called 'bogus' Keystonees."

Turpin's first work at Keystone was a few small appearances including a Mack Swain and Ethel Teare two-reeler, *Lost – A Cook*, where he makes a cameo appearance as a guest at a party and can't stay away from the punch bowl, along with a couple quickie one-reel Triangle-Komedies, *Sole Mates* and *The Automaton Figure*. According again to Lahue, Sennett saw the latter film, "liked it and ordered that the one-reeler be

¹ My thanks to Randy Miller for his assistance with the Turpin Keystone contract.



Above, Ben Turpin in the one-reeler *Sole Mates* with Vivian Edwards and Alfred Gronell, 1917. Left, frame enlargement from Turpin's first starring two-reeler as *The Clever Dummy* for Sennett.

expanded to two. Thus it became a Sennett release subject, *A Clever Dummy*. Viewing a good print of this film today, the difference in cast members found in each reel is apparent and the inconsistencies in its plot development can be attributed to this padding. Nonetheless, Ben was now a starring member of the first team and his screen personality began a gradual transformation that would accelerate into full stardom in the early twenties, when he became the highest paid comic on the lot until the arrival of Harry Langdon."

"You oughta seen them give me the ha-ha and the bass razoo on this very lot when I first came to work for Mr. Sennett. I felt like a turtle in a goldfish bowl, as the fellow said, and got about as much privacy. They followed me around just to laugh at me."

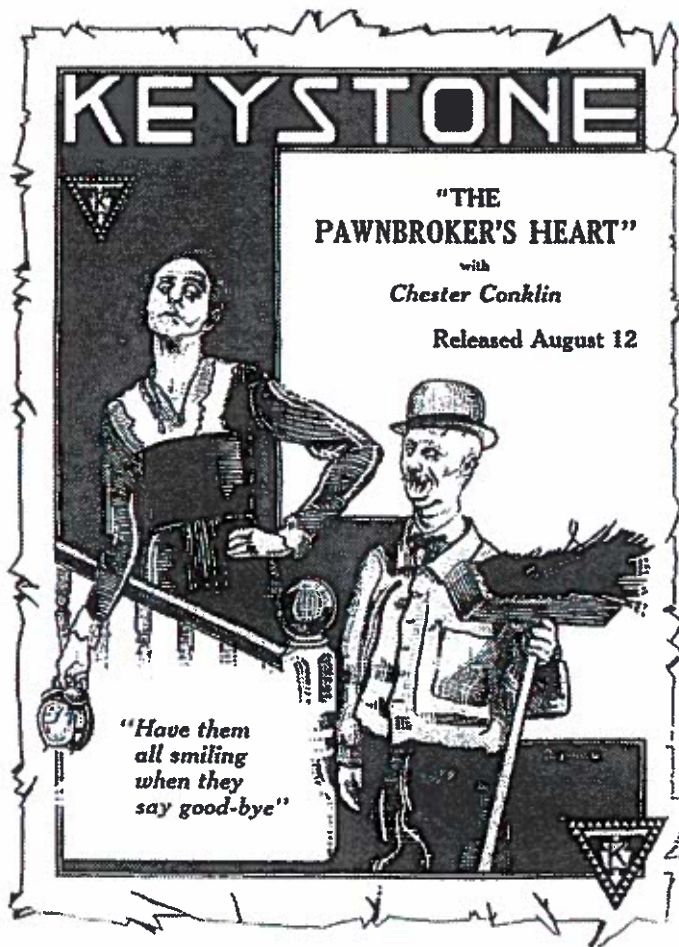
Ben repeated his role in *A Clever Dummy* as janitor again in his next film, *The Pawnbroker's Heart*. Reunited with Chester Conklin as well, it was Chester and Ben's last Keystone short together. In the pawnshop, Conklin and Turpin did their best to get their salaries with as little effort as possible. Peggy Pearce comes in and secrets herself with her boss, Glen Cavender, in an effort to get her job (as his maid) back. It starts something, for Mrs. Cavender (played by Caroline Rankin) and Peggy's hubby, Chester, don't get the angle. A band of crooks plan to rob the pawnshop. Clothing store dummies play an important part, and two bags, one with and one without cash, figure prominently in the plot.

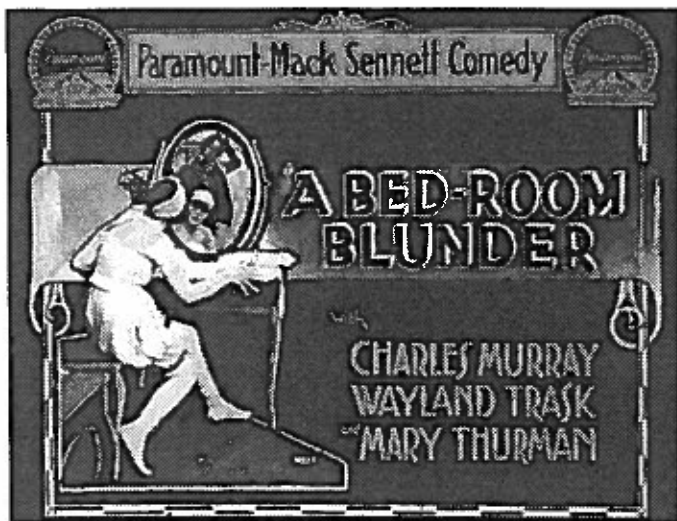
Almost as soon as he signed with Sennett, Turpin's old employer Essanay tried to capitalize on his new "fame" by reissuing and retitling some earlier shorts like *Two Laughs* and *Pete's Pants*, the later a Snakeville comedy. More comedies were to come and other enterprising individuals would also join the bandwagon of buying up the rights to these old Turpin film prints and rerelease them over the next several years.

Shortly after Ben's arrival on the Sennett lot, Mack had ended his relationship with Triangle and signed with Paramount. Gone was Sennett's right to the name Keystone and a handful of employees. With the exception of his starring role in *A Clever Dummy*, Turpin's first work in Sennett's Paramount Comedies was mainly in support of Mack's bigger stars, Charlie Murray, Louise Fazenda, Chester Conklin, and Polly Moran. In the first released Paramount-Sennett short, *A Bedroom Blunder*, Ben appears in the second reel as the front desk clerk at a seaside hotel who mixes up the rooms of Charlie Murray and Mary



Thurman, resulting in some compromising situations for all involved. In *Are Waitresses Safe?*, Ben and Slim Summerville are jealous rivals for the affection of Louise Fazenda. In *Roping Her Romeo*, Ben and Slim are rivals again, this time for the hand of Sheriff Nell McCarthy, played by Polly Moran. In the end Sheriff Nell winds up roping her romeo, Ben Turpin. So enjoyable was Turpin in the film that he returned to the Moran crew for the next few comedies. *Taming Target Center* followed on December 30, 1917 and was directed by William S. Campbell who'd soon leave Sennett and would be directing his





own Campbell Comedies for Educational, featuring kids, animals, and Snooky, the Humanzee.

The next several years were rough for the Turpin's. In late 1917 Ben's wife Carrie was seriously injured in an automobile accident while returning home from church. Ben recalled in 1926, "I believe that this (car accident) indirectly brought on (her) deafness." He wanted to believe that Carrie's injuries from the accident had much to do with her declining health of later years. "Her eyesight began failing. A year ago (1925) she went to bed a hopeless invalid." But this was all in the unforeseeable future and it's affect of Ben's life and career will be discussed later in this biography.

Campbell returned to handle the megaphone for the followup short, *Sheriff Nell's Tussle*, released February 4, 1918. These Polly Moran comedies were a big hit and Turpin's roles in them had been growing larger with each release. By the next production, Ben was the star in Polly Moran's film.

Although Polly had the title role in *Saucy Madeline*, Sennett's fifteenth film for Paramount, this was a Ben Turpin film. *Moving Picture World* noted in part, "A Sennett farce pure and simple, with story and characterization made subordinate to incident and mechanism. Polly Moran really has very limited opportunity to display her genial activity, business going largely to Ben Turpin, the man with the squint, a squint at two such decided angles that cameramen get nervous attempting a close-up." This is the first credited association of Turpin working under the direction of Sennett whiz-kid, F. Richard Jones.

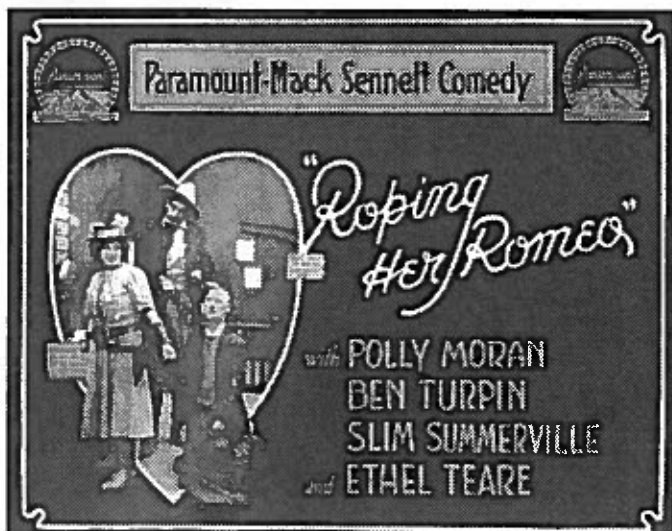
In *Saucy Madeline*, Ben enters the bar of Charlie "Heinie"

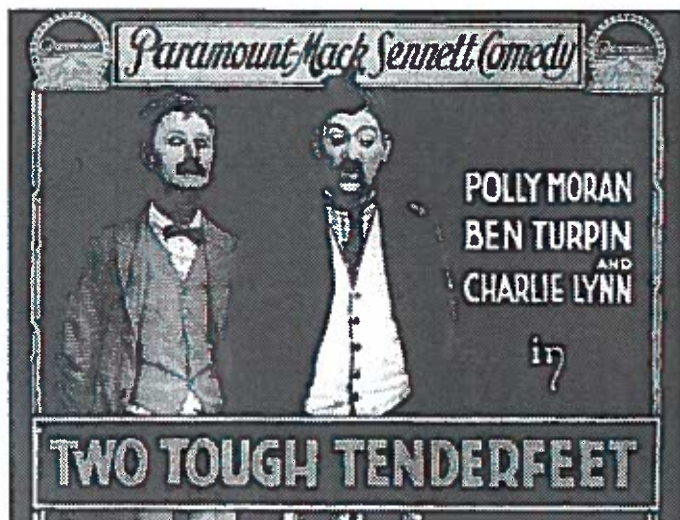


Conklin (in their first of several films together) bringing with him his own bottle, plate and silverware and begins to fill up on sandwiches from the saloon's free lunch counter. Annoyed by this, Charlie orders Ben to help the giant iceman Wayland Trask bring the huge ice blocks in. He is next put to work in Charlie's adjacent bowling alley where he meets Polly Moran and they throw a few balls. Charlie enters the alley and sees Ben not working – but getting friendly with his wife, Polly. Jealous Charlie decides to get in on a game against Ben which is now for money. Below their lane, Jack Cooper wields a huge magnet which manipulates the Charlie's bowling balls into perfect strikes. Turpin's ball rolls down the alley everywhere but at the pins. Cooper soon gets the throwing order mixed up and Ben takes the lead in the game until two anarchists enter the bowling alley with a bomb and end the first reel with an explosion.

The second reel begins within a packed theater whom are prepared to watch a stage show featuring Polly, Harry Gribbon, and Turpin who is also propboy and one-man orchestra. All along Charlie has been suspicious of Ben and Polly's attentions. During the stage production, their romantic scenes are just too real for Charlie. Sneaking backstage, Charlie chases Ben throughout the theater, out into the street then above across rooftops. Suddenly they crash through a skylight falling into a ladies Turkish bath and by now are too exhausted to run any further as the film fades out.

Dick Jones returned to knock out the next Turpin short, *The Battle Royal*, which was another Sennett hit. Again Polly Moran





not only took a back seat to the antics of Turpin, but now Charlie Conklin was getting more footage than Polly. By this time Conklin, who had formerly appeared in many Joker Comedies for Universal with Gale Henry, Billy Franey, Milburn Morante, et al, had abbreviated his name to simply Charlie Lynn to avoid any confusion between himself and, friend and co-worker at Sennett, Chester Conklin. When Chester would leave Mack about a year later, Lynn would revert back to his original name.

The trio of Turpin, Lynn and Moran were back again with *Two Tough Tenderfeet* on June 16, 1918, and Polly resumed her role as Sheriff Nell in another successful short set out west.

Sennett's publicist Harry C. Carr later recalled for *Smart Set* magazine:

Ben Turpin joined the company while I was there.

He was still a Happy Hooligan when he joined us. He was always getting hurt. A wire would wait all its life to break with Ben. If anything broke on the set the end always flew up and hit Ben.

Sennett put Ben in a series of comedies with Polly Moran and a man whose front name was Heine (Conklin). His team mates were jealous of Ben. One of the daily entertainments of the studio was to stand around the front gate when they came together for the day and hear the names they called each other – the result of a long night's patient thought and research.

During the course of the long array of battles in this unit, the management got a terrible "mad" at Miss Moran. In fact it was decided to dispense with her services. A shriek of protest came from the "trade." Exhibitors who were our cash customers protested that all their patrons demanded the girl who rode bucking broncos in the "Sheriff Nell" comedies. "The girl who rides" was one of the big sellers of pictures. So Miss Moran came back with an advanced salary and a grim smile. A grim smile because she never had ridden. All the broncos were busted for her by doubles.

After completing her part as pawnshop owner Rebecca O'Brien in Turpin and Lynn's *She Loved Him Plenty*, Polly Moran ended a three and-a-half-year association with Sennett. News of the day said she embarked on an extensive vaudeville tour. Upon her return she went to Henry Lehman's Fox-Sunshine where she was in the company of many former Keystoneers and was enticed to continue the character of Sheriff Nell. Polly continued in film throughout the years and had a long career in the business. But back at Sennett, the Turpin-Lynn on-screen rivalry had developed into one of pals.²

In December 1918 Harry C. Carr gave the first extensive

interview with Ben Turpin to *Photoplay* magazine.

Ben is now a famous comedian and acts in the Mack Sennett comedies where he dodges pies and gets his teeth knocked out and makes everybody laugh.

"It's a great life. I've been in the hospital twenty-five times. I've had my teeth knocked out four times. One time they got me up on a rope over a canyon and somebody let go of the rope, dropping me about the distance you fall out of a balloon. I've been hit by a peevish lion and chased by temperamental dog actors.

"In one of the Mack Sennett comedies the villain was to hit me with a trick statuette. He grabbed up one made out of solid marble by mistake. I just remember everything turning black; then I got mad and soaked the guy. He let out a yell and I found out it was my wife. I had been in bed a week.

"Another time, I was acting in Mack Sennett's comedy, *The Battle Royal*. There was a scene where a fellow was to swat me with a club padded on the end with a boxing glove. The glove slipped off and hit me on the top of the head so hard I went down through the floor."

To see Ben at his best you should see him in the intervals between making the pictures. He never turns off the juice.

If he isn't imitating D.W. Griffith or Cecil B. DeMille, he is pretending to be a little lost heroine lost in a shivering snow storm on the sidewalks of New York. One of Ben's favorite diversions is to get down on his hands and knees and imitate Teddy, the Mack Sennett dog.

Between pictures, Ben is to be found at Katy's. Katy runs a little cafe at the corner near the studio.

Ben takes a seat at one of Katy's best tables and spends the day there. He quarrels with Katy over the best way to mix batter. He plays horse with Mrs. Terence O'Grady's children while the mother is in passing the time of day with Katy and maybe borrowing the shade of a slice of butter. When the ice man comes around, Ben gives his imitation of a pig stuck under a fence and the ice man goes out cackling. Ben has a little jest with the postman when he comes around and a merry quip for the edification of the egg man. Somewhere around eleven o'clock the barber from up the street drops in and he and Ben talk War.

Ben has a hoarse croaking voice and his terrible sarcasms about the Kaiser would carry to Berlin on a clear day.

The Turpin comedies kept coming... *Sleuths; Hide and Seek, Detectives; Cupid's Day Off; East Lynne With*



² Be sure to see the article on Turpin and Lynn which ran in our second issue of *Slapstick!*



The start of a perfect day, Charlie Lynn, with toothache, keeping Ben from getting any further sleep in *When Love Is Blind*, 1919.

Variations; When Love Is Blind; No Mother to Guide Him; Yankee Doodle in Berlin; Uncle Tom Without the Cabin; Salome VS Shenandoah. Each new release more popular than the last. Between his pictures, it was a nice surprise for the fans when Ben popped up out of nowhere in a Charlie Murray comedy such as *Whose Little Wife Are You?*, *Trying to Get Along*, or *The Dentist*, and Chester Conklin's *The Foolish Age* and *Loves False Faces*, or even Louise Fazenda's *Treating 'em Rough* and *The Star Boarder*. It was a reciprocal thing on the Sennett lot and these same stars would often pop up in Turpin's films as well.

In *Hide and Seek, Detectives*, Ben complicates the detective business by falling in love, and Marie, who is the object of his devotion, still further complicates matters by finding a new beau in the person of Tom Kennedy, who is about the size of a fighting bull elephant. Tom wins Marie's attention by saving her life in a funny way. Unless they have the services of an army to help them, Ben and Charlie of the firm *Hide and Seek, Detectives*, realize that it is no use trying to do anything to Tom.

They try it once and only by means of a couple of lassos do they manage to escape annihilation. Ben succeeds in "roping" Tom on one side while Charlie ties him up on the other. When Tom charges upon Ben, Charlie manages to hold the giant back. When Tom turns on Charlie, then Ben put on the brakes.

They can't keep running around after him forever with a pair of lassos so they invent a plan to have him hanged for killing a poor old bum they find in a park.

Tom's courtroom trial is one of the highlights of this comedy. Just as Ben and Charlie, with a couple of queens, are celebrating his downfall, the door opens and they look up to see the irate giant himself glowering like a stormcloud. He carefully locks the door, escorts the ladies to chairs and gives them magazines to read while the massacre is in progress.

In April 1919 a few months after Carr's interview with Turpin, *Motion Picture Magazine's* Emma Lindsay Squier in her article, "The Sad Business of Being Funny," asked Ben, "Tell me something about the funny side of making comedies."

"There ain't no such animal," said Ben, eyeing me sorrowfully – at least he may have been looking at me – it's hard to tell – "It's all hard work – nothing funny about it except the laughs you get out of the screen!"

"...Look at me now; I'm forty-nine years old, and been in the business eleven years, and I've been in the hospital twenty-five times.

"I've been hit on the head with an iron horseshoe, knocked silly with a barber pole, stepped on by horses, and run over by

machines. Once they were to hit me with a five-foot 'break-away' statue of light material, and the prop man got a real one by mistake – and say, when I come to, I didn't know whether my name was Ben Turpin or Mary Pickford! Another time they were slamming dummies against a wall, but the heads broke off all of them. They were short of time on the scene and didn't have any more dummies, so I told the directors to use me; they did, and my head wasn't broke – but it made an awful dent in the wall!

"Sure, it all looks funny but how many fans know what we go thru to get the right effect? It gets my goat to sit behind a Percy-boy who tells Mabel – 'Oh, no, they don't really hit him – they just pretend to; oh no, that isn't a real fall – it just looks like it.'

"Say!" he broke off suddenly, "if you want to know whether the falls is real or not, look at this!"

He rose from the table and moved over to a cleared space in the room. Without the slightest preparation, he leaped into the air, turned a backward somersault, and came down flat on his back with an awful smacking thud.

I gasped for breath, but he was on his feet before I could utter a word. The other actors went on eating, merely glancing up as he brushed himself off; it was evidently Ben's little way of keeping himself in trim for his work.

"That's an easy one." He said as he rejoined us. "I can do eight different kinds of falls, and they're all real, believe me!"

I believed him.

One popular fall known as the 108 had become synonymous with Turpin.

Sennett told his biographer Gene Fowler, "The Leaping Lena feats of Turpin aroused the envy of the other cops, all of whom were great and furious tumblers. This led to impromptu contests to determine who could endure the most fantastic falls. Sometimes the comedians would vie with one another on the sidewalks of Edendale, much to the amazement of the civilians.

"Turpin did not confine his leaping practices to the lot or the sidewalks. He used to simulate a high-diving epilepsy and fall from the platforms of street cars. The trolley crews would be terrified. Once he staggered to the tracks and sunfished directly in the path of an approaching car. The motorman ground the brakes and Turpin rolled from the right-of-way just in time to escape injury. He quickly wriggled beneath the trucks of the now-stalled car and pretended he had been run over. Someone called an ambulance, and when the doctor leaned over Turpin to examine him, Ben opened his very cross eyes and almost scared the surgeon to death. Tramway officials requested Sennett to keep Turpin off their tracks.

"He's a menace," said the inspector. 'He breaks our motormen's morale.'

Sennett himself recalled in his autobiography, *King of Comedy*, "A 108 is an acrobat's term for a comic fall which only the most skillful athletes can perform without lethal results. One foot goes forward, and the other foot goes backward, the comedian does a counter somersault and lands flat on his back.

"I've seen Turpin perform the 108 not only on streetcars but on concrete sidewalks."

Sennett's publicity staff announced in February 1919:

East Lynne With Variations, the current Paramount-Mack Sennett comedy represents one of Mack Sennett's mightiest blows at gloom. It has been a long time since this versatile producer of comedies, who has done more than his share of the task of keeping the public in good humor, has evolved a more dynamic comedy than his fast-stepping, breezy satire on the old "melodrammer" with which almost every man, woman and child is familiar. The travesty on the favorite heart-winger of a generation ago is so ludicrously funny that it will appeal to every type of audience.

Ben Turpin as the matinee idol and hero is a scream of laughter, and he is ably abetted by Charles Lynn as the villain and Marie Prevost as the girl. The deserted mother and her child who are turned away by the hard hearted father, the fearful snowstorm, the lashing of the heroine to the rails and her rescue, and the sawmill scene in which the fair lady is all but made into mincemeat are features of the travesty. Two intoxicated men sitting in a box get so excited as the "melodrammer" speeds into high that they jump upon the stage and thicken the plot.

The property man becomes jealous of his wife, the leading lady, and takes her home, forcing the resourceful Ben to capture a fair maiden from the audience before the play can proceed. Then something terrible happens to the snowstorm, and the ocean suddenly goes dry while the villain is attempting to escape in a submarine — a new angle in villainy which will win a hand.

To cap the climax, the snow storm is set on fire and the stony-hearted father and villain have a terrible time finding a safe spot on which they can die without being scorched. An excited spectator, who can stand the suspense no longer, rushes upon the stage to rescue the persecuted heroine from the circular saw, and succeeds in mussing up the plot something terrible.

East Lynne With Variations proved a big hit and Sennett kept the ball rolling with these stage show parodies all of which proved successful. Turpin was to even return to stage show parodies in one way or other with later comedies like *Romeo and Juliet* (1924) and *A Raspberry Romance* (1925).

In *Uncle Tom Without the Cabin*, Ben and Charlie Lynn are partners in a one night stand Uncle Tom's Cabin show. Marie is Ben's wife and she is pursued by stage Johnnies with the result that the opening of the show is delayed. Charlie urges Ben to adopt disciplinary methods and begins to mix up things with Marie who gives a good account of herself in the scrimmage. Eva Thatcher, a village dramatic critic, comes to interview the star performer of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Ben seeks in vain to be interviewed, but the critic insists upon only talking to a woman star. Pretending to show her how make-up is put on, Marie paints a moustache and goatee on Eva's face. The performance begins and as Simon Legree (Charlie) rides in and beats up Ben, who is playing Uncle Tom, so effectively that Ben jumps the job.

Marie plays the dual part of Little Eva, and Eliza. In the latter role she crosses the ice and loses her skirt because of a nail in a block of ice. She trips across the ice cakes in black bloomers and the chief bloodhound, Teddy, on catching up to her, licks her face, greatly to the anger of the audience. In the scene that follows, a careless stagehand upsets a whole skyful of snow on Ben almost burying him alive.

The audience makes merry over the mishaps of the performers, and when they see the moustache and goatee on Eva's face, they become indignant. Someone hurls a pie into Charlie's face, and PRESTO!, a race track gets mixed up with the scene with Ben as a heroic jockey. Somebody explodes a bunch of firecrackers under the horse and the animal wrecks the stage and puts everybody, including the audience, to rout.

Salome VS Shenandoah was the next release: A small road company decides to give its audience a treat by presenting two shows in one night — that is, if they can survive the first show. The first play is a melodrama of the Civil War, Ben Turpin and Phyllis Haver being Southern spies. Disguised as an officer of the Army on the Potomac, Ben orders Charlie Lynn, a Northern officer, to charge upon the Rebels. The whole Northern army is killed except Lynn, who accuses Ben of being a spy and orders

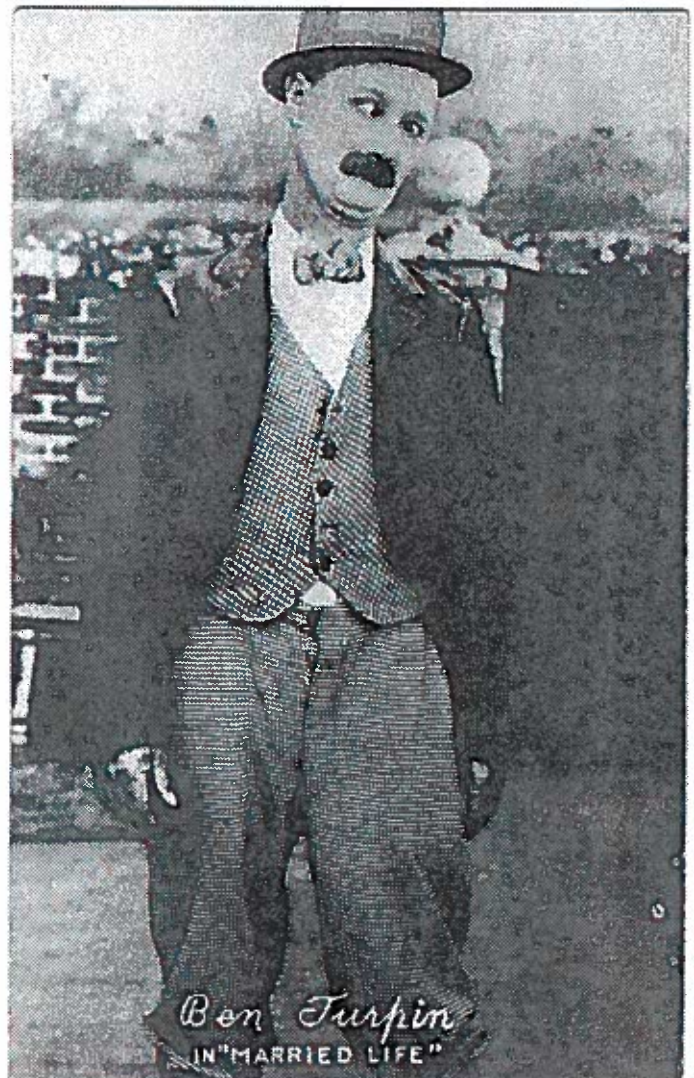
his execution. But in the nick of time, as usual, Phyllis rushes in with the pardon and Ben is saved. End of first show.

The second act, "Salomé," has Charlie Murray as the king, Lynn as a vassal, and Phyllis Haver, shimmier extraordinary. Ben Turpin, as John the Baptist, enters, and after having judgment passed upon him, is taken out to be executed. Disguised as a slave, Ben comes back carrying the supposed head of John and sticks around to watch the dancing. While doing a dance Phyllis stabs the king, who dies a horrible death. She then stabs herself, after placing some cushions conveniently near by to fall upon, and when a property man overturns a vat of water, flooding the stage, the show ends.

Interviewer Gordon Gassaway for *Picture Play* found out from Ben, "There's nothing spontaneous in our funnyisms here in Sennettville, no matter how spontaneous they may appear on the screen. Every gag, every fall, every pie is figured out long beforehand.

"That is what we were doing when you came on the stage today. Kalla Pasha, Charlie Murray, and I always get together every morning divide up the laughs. They say I have the advantage of them, but I don't think so.

Gassaway noted "He deliberately plans every posture he assumes before the camera, and at home he studies these postures for hours before a large mirror. Every crook of his finger or bend of his knee is deliberate, and nothing is left to chance."



Turpin continues, "I believe that the hands are much more important in comedy than any other physical adjunct, but all comedy must originate in the brain before it is mirrored on the body.

"The real secret of my success is the apparent lack of brains I show, but some people are kind enough to say for me that it takes brains to conceal any brains.

In the summer of 1919 the Sennett studios began production on what was to become Ben's first starring feature, *Married Life*. Upon its release, *Picture Play* magazine's Peter Milne reviewed the film in September 1920:

Married Life is a perfect burlesque. First, Mr. Sennett provided himself with a coherent plot. It is one that many an old-timer will readily recognize as the foundation of a large number of "ten, twenty, thirty" melodramas. Its hero is Rodney St. Clair, a man's man, if you please, and in this role appears the serious minded Ben Turpin. Rodney is the idol of the college football team in the first scenes and later developments show him as one of the city's social pets. Those of you with imagination sufficient to reconcile Ben with such a role will sense the great comedy possibilities of the picture and realize its superb quality of burlesque immediately.

Ben, or Rodney, is the victim of foul circumstance. A doctor's pretty wife writes a play that is given for charity, and she and Rodney appear in the roles of the lovers. Their numerous kissing scenes anger the doctor, and later he decides, having been urged on by the villain, to operate on Rodney, and let the operation prove fatal. Of course, in the end virtue reaps its reward and Rodney is saved, the villain succumbing to his usual defeat.

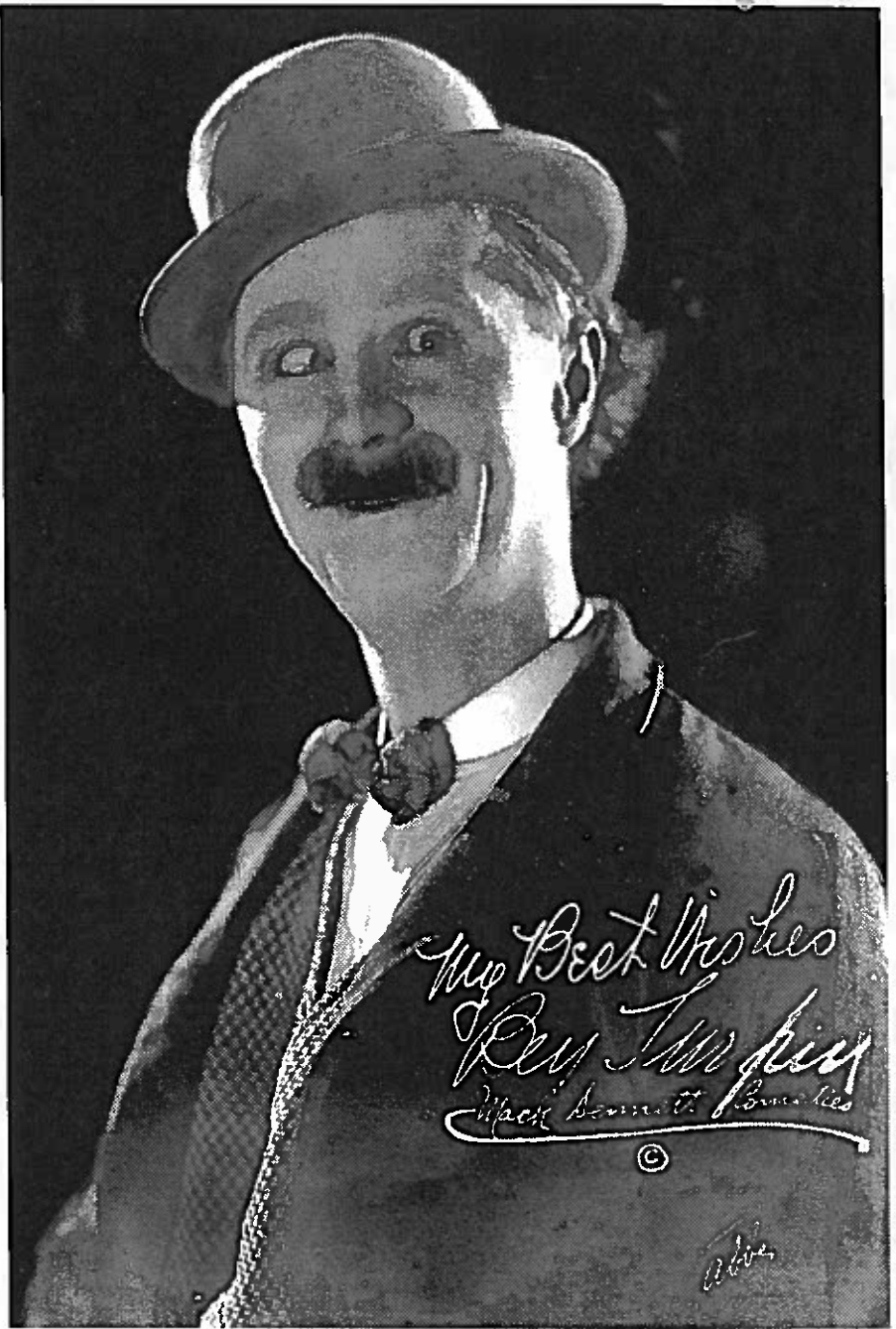
Possibly the scenes of the charity play are the funniest of the picture, but in saying this I immediately lay myself open to more differences of opinion. Some people will like the football game scene in which Ben Turpin is introduced with his head buried in the dirt. Others will point to the hilarious comedy thrills of the airplane scenes, and others the bits in which Ben is seen inflated with illuminating gas and floating through the corridors of a hospital.

In 1920, Ben told *Movie Mirror* magazine:

"It isn't every man fifty years of age who can go through what I have done in motion pictures and live to tell the tale as I am doing now. My dear 'fans,' I want you to know that the short scene of forty or fifty feet of (35mm) film which seems so easy to you requires me to work for many days - cruel, grinding labor while the cameraman may be taking thousands of feet of film to make that same forty as nearly perfect as possible.

"In the hospital scene of *Married Life* you will remember, if you saw it, that I was dropped from a stretcher and from the ambulance onto the street several times. Those falls actually occurred and if I took one real fall I took a hundred in that picture and I must say that the street was not a bed of roses. It's very easy for a director to say to some big fellow, 'Jump on Ben, you can't hurt him - stand on him - make it real,' and similar instructions but think of poor little me all that time. I have to take it all and never whimper.

"Just the same there's a fascination about the work and the



only time I rest is during the three or four weeks I spend each year at Hot Springs. If I didn't get that rest I'd doubtlessly be making comedies in another sphere."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

**Turpin's Associated First
National Comedies and more**

Pleasant Dreams until next issue!

Slap Stick!

